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THE LAIRDS OF FIFE.

THE
LAIRDS OF FIFE.

VELUTI IN SPECULUM.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR CONSTABLE & CO.
AND
HURST, CHANCE & CO. LONDON.

1828.

Printed by Walker & Greig,
Edinburgh.

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THE

LAIRDS OF FIFE.

CHAPTER I.

—Narcissa follows.

Night Thoughts.

MRS FIFE set down her friend, Miss Leslie, and drove her tired cattle on to the hero of Madrake's wild lucubrations. There, however, the tide of curiosity was for once condemned to be stopped. Mrs Fife's vivacity was again deadened by the monotonous spectacle of heavy, wheezing, breathless Mr M'Pech, (who had ceased from the personal pursuit of lucre chiefly from want of strength), since she could perceive that he avoided her with that intuitive sense of

danger which had incited him to repulse the civilities of his own grand-nephew, Madrake.

Mrs Fife gazed upon him, it is true, with that intense and vigilant wonder with which, it might be supposed, she would have contemplated the attributes of one of those animals which prowl about at the bottom of the depths of the sea, and which are thought to surpass in size and power all that the human eye has ever looked upon; but the investigation, interesting and curious as it was, became less and less satisfactory. She endeavoured to execute what she had once intended before,—viz. A catechism on the mysteries of his first original, and an exposition of his future views, ideas, wishes, and intentions,—all which, however, Mr M'Pech took proper care to rebut, by appearing more than usually insensible and stupid.

To make up for this disappointment,—for Mrs Fife could easily perceive that she was not to succeed any further in that direction,—she was visited by her more particular man of business, who wished, since she appeared at leisure, to superintend the execution of certain testa-

mentary settlements, which might express her last intentions with respect to the far-famed baronies of Eppie and Fiddler, now, through the virtues of the defunct Mr M'Farlane, confided to her own right of disposal.

That she should not come so far without accomplishing *something*, seemed to Mrs Fife a sufficient apology for attending to the affair *in dubio*; and she accordingly settled the succession of the celebrated Fife-hall—but whether in favour of Sophia Leslie; a member of Assembly in Jamaica, who continued to send her rums and sweetmeats; or the wily lawyer who officiated, we have not had any proper opportunity of ascertaining.

But where was Madrake all this while? He was engaged, for one thing,—principally because there was a dearth at this time amongst the men of fashion,—to dine with the Right Honourable the Viscount and Viscountess Aloof; in town, because every other person was preparing to go out of it; and at home, in order to entertain the Countess of Montgomery and her daughter Lady Juliana, who were come, since

the weather was fine, to throw some cash amongst the shopkeepers.

Economy, lately thwarted ambition, and early discontent, were the prevailing causes which induced my Lord Aloof and family to remain on their estates, and to domesticate themselves in Edinburgh during part of the agreeable months of January, February, and March. No better motive, however, be it known, was mixed up with this programme. They did not love their native Athens; they despised its inhabitants; and were nowise stirred up with any undue enthusiasm for their country, or the wonders it contained.

Lord Aloof himself was thin, spare, lean, sharp-visaged, hard, and dry. His Lady was rather embonpoint, but dull, languid, sleepy; though eminently awake to her own consequence, which was protected on all sides by a sufficiency of disdain and pride, united with the better qualities of suspicion and distrust. His daughters were triple refined, well educated, and well bred young ladies; immaculately free from all gaucherie and empressement, as well as

all other deteriorating peculiarities. In the first years of their youth, like many of their contemporaries, they had pined for distinction and preferment; but, ever frigid and repulsive, they concealed, under the labyrinth folds of reserve and pride, even their most innocent and most harmless inclinations. The illustrious Augusta Matilda had, however, fallen into the clutches of Sir Henry Maringle's eldest son;—for in marriages, as in every thing else, the most improbable ones will sometimes eclat, while more feasible matches will get leave to hang fire, or dissolve at once in smoke;—and that just about the time that she and her sister in frost, Lætitia Alicia, had volunteered their patronage in favour of a Sunday school; the true principles of which they could not appreciate, and did not very well understand, since they were more inclined to look upon the matter merely as incense offered up, not to their superior sanctity, but to their superior pride. My Lord Aloof's only son, the Honourable Charles James Ferdinand Frederick, was a combined petrification of the whole. Like his

sisters, his manners and education exhibited every thing that was perfect, and every thing that was consistent; and there, like his sisters, the machine was destined to stop. Mr Aloof's genius, as may easily be conceived, was adverse to whatever was great and noble, generous or liberal; his pride inclined him to crush in detail whatever he could. The calm vindictive quietness of his physiognomy described the inclinations of his heart; the poverty of his mind revenged itself in neglecting and depressing those whom he suspected of the crime of being in any way enlightened beyond himself.

This specimen of pride imbodyed, however, could yet dissolve itself in a few occasional smiles and sighs in favour of the Lady Juliana, the only child of the late Earl of Montgomery, and the heiress of her mother's property and estates; and who, since her father's death, had continued, much to the satisfaction of the Aloofs, to reside in Scotland. But Lady Juliana, though she felt always happy to be well with persons of such a very safe reputation as the fastidious Aloofs, was not altogether inclined to trust her-

self within the pale of their domestic arrangements. For, though she could have nothing to object to the person or to the circumstances of the illustrious heir-apparent, yet—and we may here quote the bare-worn distich, Dr Fell—there was a something in the mere aspect of the young gentleman's physiognomy, correct as it was, which said “beware,” although every thing else called upon her to approve. In the end, she could understand him to be—since their stations were equal—“neither one thing nor another,” and consequently, unfit to be intrusted with the keeping of that liberty of which she had not yet herself tired. In the mean time, the coldness of his advances had never exposed the honourable lover to a repulse; and, as Lady Montgomery rather approved of his attentions, and the Aloof family seemed much of the same mind, the good understanding of the parties continued for the while to subsist.

In this good understanding, then, Lady Montgomery and her daughter followed Madrake to the banquet, got up entirely for their Ladyships' entertainment; at which, likewise, was suf-

ferred to compear Miss Methodical, in town by accident,—but who, like the rest of the world, had no objections to break through the rules of mere ordinary every-day life, (Miss Methodical had not yet “come out,”) when their doing so is to add in any way to their own interest or importance;—and the bulky Sir George Terrorfield.

“You know the daughter, Madrake, I suppose?” said the latter personage, composing his stormy features now into an almost Aloof-like stillness.

“No,” Madrake would have said, but at that instant the Countess, now announced, walked on past them to the head of the room, where stood the sacred sofa, and its still more sacred contents.

Lady Juliana’s dress had by accident caught hold of some of the ornamental fastenings of the door: she stopped to disentangle it, and Madrake flew to assist. The lady had already removed the cause of detention; she turned, however, to thank him for his ready attention, and their eyes met for the first time.

Lady Juliana's good-natured smile fled imperceptibly, and she continued to regard him without attempting either to advance or to retire. There was a something in that air of careless gallantry, so remarkable in Madrake's abroad, and in the tone of confidence with which he regarded her, that filled her with a confused and bewildering idea of his idiosyncrasy. The arm of the Honourable Charles James was the first object that awakened her from her sensation—half-pleasure, half-astonishment.

The two black-looking female Aloofs suffered this angel to approach, and to take her place on the third seat down, in silence, and without seeming to derive much pleasure from her presence. The task of engrossing her they left to the Honourable Charles James, who now proved himself more dexterous in the art than could, from such a frigidity, have been expected.

Madrake turned his eyes once more upon the Lady Juliana, and there, in imitation of hers, they fixed. There was nothing rude, or even what might be called inquisitive, in their expression; and Lady Juliana, without referring altogether

to her almost unrivalled charms, suffered him, in acknowledgment of her own fault, to gaze in peace.

“ Who is he ?” she ventured to whisper the Honourable Charles James Aloof.

Mr Aloof, terrified lest he should be betrayed to add to the reputation of a person of whom, notwithstanding his hauteur, he was somewhat afraid, would not say ; but left him to the care of the now approaching Terrorfield.

Terrorfield hurried over the biography of Madrake as fast as could be expected ; and drew himself formally up beside the little dun Miss Methodical, to whom he desired, *pour passer le temps*, to be thought attached. He wearied, however, of her simple “ Ay’s” and “ No’s,” and betook himself to a far different quarter.

“ Lady Aloof, can you guess what has become of Monsieur Diabolique ?”

“ Monsieur Diabolique !” said Lady Aloof, and her stiff lips closed once more in lifeless chilling silence.

Lady Juliana and her mother, from good

breeding; the Aloofs, from indifference; Sir George Terrorfield, from accident; Madrake, from contemplating the beauty of Lady Juliana; and Miss Methodical, because at this faint first period of her life she never spoke—nobody inquired any further into the cause of detention of the afore-mentioned Monsieur Diabolique.

Leaving Madrake and the Honourable Charles James, however, to seek, though by very opposite means, the favour of the Lady Juliana, and of her mother the Countess, we shall ourselves inquire into the mystery of Monsieur Diabolique's default.

Monsieur Diabolique had—at a *feu de joie* in honour of Colonel Brown of Bertie's birthday, at which, while passing on in grim contempt, he had been pressed and entreated to attend—by *accident* let off a horse-pistol close to the ear of Mrs Augustus Maringle, which, she being *enceinte*, was supposed to have endangered her life. The accident, however, only destroyed her own hopes of the double surnames which she had intended for her offspring, and her father's hitherto indulged expectations of

seeing himself again represented in the supposed forthcoming series of Brown-Maringles. Monsieur Diabolique, for reasons which we can only suspect, without being very able entirely to understand, was absolved of all malice, and the blame laid upon some other person ; and, in a few weeks afterwards, the affair and its consequences came to be laid on the shelf. It had, however, the effect, in the mean time, of hurrying back Mrs Fife, for whose additional gratification a new scene was about to open, occasioned in some measure by the result of the first.

CHAPTER II.

“Thou shalt be punish’d for thus frightening me,
For I am sick, and capable of fears ;
Oppress’d with wrongs, and therefore full of fears ;
A widow, husbandless, subject to fears ;
A woman, naturally born to fears ;
And, though thou now confess thou didst but jest,
With my vex’d spirits I cannot take a truce,
But they will quake and tremble all this day.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“REALLY that man Brown puzzles me,” said Mrs Fife to her friend Miss Leslie, whilst domiciled together once more at Fife-hall. “He has changed all his servants, Mrs Gregory tells me, merely because they happened to rest themselves when they came to my house ; and has got other ones, who are now charged at their peril to open their mouths—eating and talking being, as he says, the two great vices of the

community. Now, what would you advise me to do with the man? Isn't it shocking?"

"O, my dear Madam, it is mere accident—mere accident. Colonel Brown could never think of such a thing as to"—

—"Mere accident, child! Is it mere accident that has induced him to cut a road of three quarters of a mile's length through his estate to get nearer the Methodicals? Or is it mere accident, think you, that enables him to dine there regularly twice a-week?"

"Why, to be sure, one would almost suppose some meaning in that."

"Well, my dear, you are turning rational at last; for I see you are beginning, like myself, to wish to get to the bottom of things. In six months you will see him married to Miss Methodical."

"Miss Methodical, my dear Mrs Fife! Why, she is only seventeen, and he is about seven-and-fifty."

"Is he no more, my dear?"

"Why, I should think not."

"And why should you think not?"

"He does not look"—

—“O, never mind his looks; we have got other business to mind than Colonel Brown’s looks. We must go and look after Lady Methodical to-morrow morning at farthest. She will take it as such a compliment; and then, as somebody was telling me, Tuesdays and Fridays are the dining days; and there is no Colonel but loves a mess. By the bye, have you ever finished that white tippet yet?”

“ I have just finished it; and if you will allow me to fetch it ”——

—“ O, pray hush, my dear Miss Leslie; your talking quite confuses me. Didn’t you hear a noise just now ?”

Miss Leslie made a signal in the negative.

“ All silent below, do you think ?”

Miss Leslie made a signal in the affirmative.

“ Is it possible that Mrs Gregory can have any visitors without my knowledge ?” continued Mrs Fife in a whisper.

Miss Leslie repeated her first signal; but finding she was misunderstood, she composed herself to remain neuter.

“ Good gracious ! Miss Leslie, have you lost your speech ? ”

“ No,” answered Miss Leslie, in a hollow whisper, and now very much inclined to encourage the joke.

“ Now that’s better, my dear Miss Leslie. But come with me,” she added, going towards the door, and beckoning the young lady to follow her ; “ you and I must have a perambulation through the Hall. I had last night a very curious dream about it ; and I feel a very great desire to know whether every thing is as it is.” And the two ladies, like Moth and Mustardseed, began on tiptoe their active peregrinations.

They had needled pretty successfully through ante-rooms, drawing-rooms, billiard and music-rooms, libraries, corridors, &c. &c. &c. when, taking a sudden flight towards a more distant quarter of the edifice, they found themselves within the precincts of the late Mr M’Farlane’s dressing and sleeping apartments.

The air of mingled luxury and comfort which pervaded these rooms, caused the pair to pause ;

and Miss Leslie seated herself in a deep soft-cushioned fauteuil, in order the better to recognize the care that had been taken, and taken in vain, to secure the further prolongation of life.

“Sad place this, my dear,” observed Mrs Fife, sliding upon trial into an adjoining lounge: “Here it was that poor M^cFarlane complained of being retaliated upon by all the cayenne pickles he had ever munched; though his disease, the doctors pretended to say, proceeded from cold. Ah, poor dear thing! if you had only heard his groans, and seen me watching to hear what should come next, you would not have thought him slightly punished for his discontent.”

“Ah, poor body! Perhaps he could as little help that as the persecution of the pickles,” returned Miss Leslie, diverted in spite of herself.

“I wonder if he’s in heaven?” resumed Mrs Fife. “Or, I wonder if the dead ever come back?”

“O, my dear Mrs Fife, how *can* you talk so? for really these are subjects ill calculated for minds weak and superstitious like ours.”

“ Well, I don’t know much about it, Sophia. But, pray, do help me to rise: really, I had no idea that I could have sat so long opposite to poor dear Mr M’Farlane’s bed; though Miss Brown always prefers it when she happens to sleep here—for she says, she has such an opinion of the double windows. Do you know, I once attempted to sleep here myself; but I had no sooner lain down than I thought Mr M’Farlane came back to tell me, that, if I did not away, he should no longer sleep in his grave in—*peace*.”——

The word *peace* was articulated mechanically, for Mrs Fife had sunk down again into the lounge, her courage put to flight by a low mumbling sound which seemed to issue from the fatal bed, the massive folds of which were now beginning to be enveloped in the deepening shades of advancing twilight.

“ Heavenly mercy!” she at last exclaimed, “ What was that?”

“ The wind, I suppose,” Miss Leslie attempted to say: and she, too, looked wildly round in vague and terrified suspense.

“No!” returned Mrs Fife in the same sepulchral tone; “it is Mr M‘Farlane come back: I know it by my dream.—But are you positively going to faint, my dear?”

“Oh, no, my dear Mrs Fife,” answered Miss Leslie, now making an effort at courage, “how could you suppose that?”—Here the sounds were repeated in a louder strain; and some words of a dark mysterious meaning were heard distinctly from behind the thick curtains of the bed—“But let us make use of our remaining strength, and begone,” she added, becoming now pale and cold as death with real, though repressed, terror and alarm.

“My dear,” said Mrs Fife, agitated alike by her desire to fly, and her inclination to be better informed, “we have fifteen rooms to pass; and if we attempt the north staircase, we must take Mr M‘Farlane’s repository in our way, every article of furniture in which will assuredly rise up in judgment against us.—Stay—O merciful gracious! did you hear what the spirit said? Now there again! Oh! oh! oh!”

SPIRIT SPEAKS—“*Now you two listen—Here*

is the bed—the body—the coffin—and the hearse. Wait another moment, and I will let you see the kirkyard; and the graves where you are to be put.”—The invisible voice ceased, or rather was confounded with the repeated screams of Mrs Fife and her companion, as they fled, not so much in consternation, as in the desperation of despair, from the mysterious apartment, and the awful fiend by which it seemed to be infested.

With such dexterous rapidity had Mrs Fife and Miss Leslie pursued, although through many devious paths, their flight, that, on their arrival at the grand hall of vertû, commonly called Mr M'Farlane's Repository—that being judged the nearest means of escape—they surprised a party seated round a japan commode, thronged about with cabinets, antique jars, ivory chairs, pagan divinities, &c. &c. &c. who soon proved themselves the organ by which poor Mr M'Farlane's ghost had been so fearfully and so wonderfully conjured up; and here, in high and superb security, they had long defied the searching vigilance of their sphynx-eyed governess, Mrs Fife. This diet, then, was composed

of Mrs Fife's confidential housekeeper Mrs Gregory, Jacob her coachman, and a noted spae-wife, well known in both parishes of Eppie and Fiddler;—and which diet now condescended to disperse, scared away in turn by the double apparitions of Mrs Fife and her companion, whose previous outcries alone had given them, though too late, the first intimation of a coming convulsion.

This clashing of spirits, like the two flints which met, struck fire, and blew up in the stomach of Baron Munchausen's bear, brought confusion to a crisis. Mrs Gregory ran away fast and howling. The coachman drove through thick and thin. Mrs Fife, her natural dexterity once more returned to her, sprung forward with all the activity of delight. Miss Leslie began to laugh and cry time about; and the spae-wife stuck fast amongst the cabinets, fire-screens, punkha fans, &c. &c. by which her flight was incommoded.

“ Reading fortunes in Mr M'Farlane's repository !!! ” exclaimed Mrs Fife at last, whose senses, by the way, were always the first to come,

as well as always the first to go. “And in such company, too!” she added, fastening her quick eyes upon the again retreating spaewife. “But I think *I* have had my dream well read.—And my best china-cups, too! the most particular legacy of Mr M‘Farlane, who mentioned them on his deathbed. Upon my word!!!—But, oh, Miss Leslie! let us get back to our own old sitting-room, that we may cherish our few remaining wits for our expedition to good Lady Methodical’s; for I think the visitation of Miss Kicklecackle and her whole party was nothing to this!”

Miss Leslie, however, had seated herself by the abandoned fortune-cups, in which, no doubt, were distinctly represented letters—journeys—strangers—companies—funerals—marriages—hasty news, &c. &c.—unable, or perhaps unwilling, for a while to remove.

“My dear, dear Mrs Fife!” she exclaimed, “the dangers of all the Arabian Nights put together are nothing to this!”

“Nor the Mysteries of Udolpho either, I should think, Miss Leslie.—But here come

John and Willie, with lights. Did Mrs Gregory send you?" she added, as the pair advanced.

"Yes;" Mrs Gregory had sent them.

"Then, pray, shew the way."

"Mrs Gregory, Mem, desires to say, that if you will only forgive her this time, she will never do the like again."

"Forgive her! I think she's the most wonderful person I ever knew in my life. She is either confined to her bed; laid up with the toothache; or busy with home-made wine and confections; and yet she can find time to manage my whole house, and to set up private theatricals into the bargain!——But is she very much afraid, think you?"

"Yes; Mrs Gregory was very much afraid."

"Then tell her she could not have been more afraid than I was.—My dear Miss Leslie, why won't you take my arm?" And the ladies, preceded by their lights and pages, now pursued their way to their own original head-quarters.

The next morning's sun saw them once more restored to all the common occurrences of life.

It also saw them on their route to the maison of the renowned Lady Methodical.

“Is that smoke from their drawing-room or library-chimney, Miss Leslie?” demanded Mrs Fife, as they neared the prudent domicile of the Methodicals. “But did you ever see such regular cut hedges and ditches? And, then, these park-trees, squared off like poor Mrs Gregory’s cross-barred tarts:—But, mercy on us! what’s this?” she exclaimed, before Miss Leslie could answer either one or other of her questions. “What’s that moving along up yonder, near to the Methodical plantations?—Quick, quick! look, my dear, or they’ll escape. Pray, who are they, do you think?”

“Probably Sir James and Lady Methodical, and with them, perhaps, Mademoiselle Antoinette.”

“Sir James and Lady Methodical, and Mademoiselle Antoinette!!!” screamed Mrs Fife, her whole faculties roused and absorbed in the uncertain identification of the figures seen glimmering, at intervals, between the far-off intervening trees.—“Gracious! how this

chaise jolts !—There, again, now ; did you feel that ? I thought my very eyes had been shaken out of my head ! But now I think I have got hold of them : Now, let me see——Pray, does Lady Methodical ever wear green over pink ?”

“ I believe not.”

“ Well, I am almost positive that that bonnet’s green. But don’t you think it’s Lady Methodical by her walk ? And, pray, isn’t that a reticule she has got in her hand ?—My dear, why don’t you speak ?”

“ Really, Ma’am, what between the sheep, the trees, the motion of the carriage, and the more positive intervention of your person, I confess I can neither trace one likeness or another.”

“ Oh, now I have it !” returned Mrs Fife, who had not given herself the trouble to listen to this speech. “ That is Miss Methodical, and the other is her mother, by the manner in which she allows the gentleman to take her hand. But when did you see Sir James Methodical travelling and sauntering about at this very early time of the day ?—Still going towards the

plantation, I see. Oh, gracious! we are discovered! He has let drop Lady Methodical's hand, and they are staring at us with their necks twisted round like the craig of an ill-stuffed bird. Now look—this way, my dear. O, gracious goodness! they're off through the trees!"

And Mrs Fife's head, in her eagerness to follow up this desperate pursuit in the abstract, went pounce through the glass.

"Stop, Jacob! stop!" she loudly vociferated. "Oh! my dear Miss Leslie, pray tell me if I'm murdered or not?"

"O no, my dear Mrs Fife, you have not received the slightest injury.—Go on, Jacob."

"Why, I thought I had heard a pistol-shot go off."

"It was only the sudden shock occasioned by the breaking of the glass, my dear Madam."

"Dear me! was it only that? what became of us then, that day we chased Mr Monotony, when we broke two at once? I really think somebody ought to endeavour to invent unbreakable glass. And that puts me in mind of Mrs Horn

Regular's iron-stone, which was warranted adamant ; but which, having overset a table by their weight, were taken up again in just one thousand pieces. But, look ! look ! look ! look ! look ! Miss Leslie, did you see that carriage pass just now ?”

“ Mrs Horn Regular's, I believe.”

“ O yes, I supposed so : This is just about the time, is it not, that she pays her first morning visit ? And I dare say she is gone on to the Hall, though she must have seen me quite distinctly. How odd, that people will not be put out of their way. But we're arrived, aren't we ?”

“ I rather presume so.” And Miss Leslie followed her restless chaperone into the house.

“ Lady Methodical is not at home, I suspect,” cried Mrs Fife, darting rapidly forwards ; glad, we presume, of the supposed opportunity of looking about her as she had done at Captain Sham's——“ She is gone out to walk with Sir James, is she not ?——O, my dear Lady Methodical ! why, didn't I see you walking with Sir James not two minutes ago, about a mile and a half's distance from the house ?”

“It was Colonel Brown and Miss Methodical, whom, I believe, you had the pleasure of seeing,” said Lady Methodical; “and the third lady was, I presume, Mademoiselle Antoinette.—O, Miss Leslie, I beg your pardon: I hope you’re very well?”

“Pretty well, thank”——

—“Colonel Brown likes the air of this place better than Bertie,” resumed Lady Methodical, interrupting Miss Leslie in her duty. “And as Sir James and I make a point of never going out before two o’clock, he is so kind as to take Mademoiselle likewise in his company. We call that walk Mademoiselle’s walk; and that other to the right, Miss Methodical’s. The one is named Morning; and the other Evening. Mr Squeake has composed airs on them both.”

“Airs! do they want air, Lady Methodical? But Colonel Brown is really in the habit, then, of taking long walks with Miss Methodical?” continued Mrs Fife, resting her question this time upon the adventure of the hand so suddenly relinquished, and out of the view, too, of the attendant Mademoiselle Antoinette.

“ O yes, frequently ; and he now dines here regularly twice a-week.” For Lady Methodical knew that no care, and no industry, would suffice to keep the secret long from Mrs Fife : and she was, besides, particularly anxious to avoid bringing Mrs Horn Regular and her visit upon the carpet ; as that lady had just called to arrange a plan for keeping Mrs Fife at Coventry, during the forthcoming sejour of the Aloof family at Lady Lumberfield’s ;—Mrs Fife having rendered herself particularly obnoxious to the whole race of the Aloofs, by her irrepressible desire to obtain information, without rightly considering how much her anxiety for that information annoyed those who were the objects of it.

The spectre pedestrians had now returned ; and Colonel Brown was communing in his own mind what sort of story he should invent for himself, in order to escape the raking questions of Mrs Fife’s ordinary cannonade, when he was informed—for he had strolled into the billiard-room—by the accommodating Mademoiselle Antoinette, that their turbulent guest Mrs Fife

had been suddenly seized with a sort of giddiness in her head—the effects of the former day's exploits, we suspect—and was now safely laid past upon a chaise-longue in one of the communicating rooms, with strict orders neither to be disturbed, nor to be allowed to disturb, till dinner had been announced. For both Lady Methodical and Mrs Horn Regular, be it known, had, in default of their hospitality in town, given the recumbent and her friend Miss Leslie the entrée, for a fortnight, at the chief seats of Methodical-house and Castle Regular. And more, they had even determined on following up this piece of generosity in patch-work, by a round of regular entertainments, to which Colonel Brown himself had consented to become a party. The motive to this additional condescension was, the approaching Coventry to which they had already determined to condemn her, and the expected fêtes, selectly perfect, in honour of Lady Lumberfield, and her very illustrious kinsfolk the Viscount and Viscountess Aloof. Mrs Fife's presence, and in particular her indisposition—which was a sort of phenomenon in its way—was

highly favourable to a quick and speedy consummation of their plans; and when that lady, much the worse of her confinement, was at length conducted with all becoming care to her seat, she was made to promise for herself and friend—for Miss Leslie had greatly improved in popularity ever since the day of Miss Brown's marriage—for the next three days; to be enjoyed at Bertie, Castle Regular, and again at Methodical-house. They even contrived to engage her for a fourth, by the great desire which both Colonel Brown and Lady Methodical expressed, to pay a visit to Fife-hall so long as the weather continued favourable for such an excursion.

CHAPTER III.

Witness the sprightly joy when ought unknown
Strikes the quick sense, and wakes each active power
To brisker measures : witness the neglect
Of all familiar prospects, though beheld
With transport once ; the fond attentive gaze
Of young astonishment ; the sober zeal
Of age, commenting on prodigious things !——

AKENSIDE.

THE forthcoming preparations of the cabal, however, did not suffer the individuals who composed it to be so very particular in their attentions to the inhabitants of the Hall as not to plan some schemes to their prejudice ; and Mrs Fife, though again on the *qui vive*, was fated to experience something of their contempt and caprice.

At Mrs Horn Regular's, neither Colonel Brown nor Miss Methodical appeared ; and the Horn Regulars were amissing at Bertie. “ A

slight cold, &c. &c. obliged the family to decline, &c. the visit.' At Methodical-house, again, much disturbance was occasioned by the disappearance of Mademoiselle Antoinette, who had, as she herself declared, mistaken east for west, in attempting to return alone from the plantation walk. She was captured at length by Colonel Brown, whom Miss Methodical had despatched on this troublesome service; and the happiness of the day was accordingly sacrificed to this silly adventure, and its insignificant results.

At Fife-hall, however, the parties rallied; and as it was now their turn to cross-question and investigate, the allied forces managed, under Colonel Brown's direction, to keep the enemy both in check and subjection. The entertainment of the cabal and its adherents was further accelerated by a campaign in Mr M'Farlane's repository, headed on this occasion by Miss Leslie, who undertook to describe the catastrophe that had happened on the invasion of the Gregory faction; and the unexpected manner in which both parties, with the assistance of old

Mr M'Farlane's ghost, had been surprised into flight.

In fine, the confederates returned home highly pleased with their expedition, and the pains that had been taken, by themselves in particular, to amuse and divert them. Nay, so great and pure was the satisfaction which they enjoyed, that anticipating the time of quarantine, they condescended to expedite matters by sending Mrs Fife to Coventry by the road—an act of prudence particularly agreeable, no doubt, to the genius of the persons who suggested it.

Notwithstanding, however, the great degree of success that had attended the manœuvres of the combined armies of the Browns, the Regulars, and the Methodicals, neither they, nor a host ten thousand times their number, were sufficient to lay asleep, or at rest, the invincible and indefatigable spirit of Mrs Fife.

“What extraordinary good spirits Colonel Brown was in to-day,” she remarked to Miss Leslie, just as the last of the band disappeared even from out the pale of that high telegraph of observation, the balcony window. “And Mrs

Horn Regular, and Lady Methodical, did you ever see them so agreeable before?"

"And then Sir James, and Mr Horn Regular, were so uncommonly facetious," she added.

"And Miss Methodical, and Mademoiselle, lisped and prattled away so prettily," subjoined Miss Leslie.

"And Colonel Brown answered all my questions; actually allowed me to attempt to get something out of him."

"And all the ladies praised my dress," said Miss Leslie.

"Praised your dress, my dear!" cried Mrs Fife, in a voice of undisguised and immense astonishment. "My dear, they have ridiculed you to me every day in their lives: It being necessary, as they say, to change the contour of the head and shoulders every month, and sometimes oftener. Now, *your* head and shoulders keep always in their place;—but, pray, what did they say?"

"They commissioned Mademoiselle Antoinette, in my hearing, to inform me, that they thought my dress peculiarly becoming; and,

that my head, and the style of it, was the nearest to the Venus at Bertie of any thing they had ever yet seen or heard."

"The Venus at Bertie!" cried Mrs Fife, clapping her hands in an excess of joy. "Then my suspicions are confirmed! You *must* recollect Madrake saying, that whenever Colonel Brown wanted to carry his point, he always did it under cover of the Venus at Bertie; and now, he and the Methodicals are all one; and they too, I suppose, have learned by this time the use of the Venus at Bertie."

"And did you notice that Mrs Horn Regular was not nearly so punctual as she used to be in leaving, Mrs Fife?"

"And did you observe how readily Colonel Brown explained to me, how it happened that we should have all met together so often of late, Miss Leslie?"

"And how Miss Methodical and Mademoiselle Antoinette as regularly interrupted you?"

"And how they pressed you to sing, my dear?"

"And how Mr Horn Regular frolicked when

he put on old Mr M'Farlane's broad-brimmed negro hat?"

"And how Mademoiselle Antoinette thought she saw Mr M'Farlane's ghost?"

"And how Colonel Brown, in order to please Miss Methodical, pretended to frighten her by making her believe it?"

"And how Sir James Methodical looked when Lady Methodical recommended that he should read the fortune-cups?"

"And how Colonel Brown insisted upon reading them to Mademoiselle Antoinette; and whom again, to divert Miss Methodical, he condemned to be an old maid?"

"And how Lady Methodical smiled, and took away the cups?"

"And how they all laughed?"

"And how"——

—"Stay, stay, stay, my dear: You make me quite dizzy. But don't you think that there is something under all this?"

"It is very obvious, I should think."

"Well, well, go to bed. And, pray, be so kind as ring me up Mrs Gregory as you pass.

I must investigate this matter a little further."

Having thus replaced her friend Miss Leslie with her housekeeper, Mrs Fife began once more to cross-question her *employée* Mrs Gregory, for whose services she had more use than ever in the civil war she was about to wage with the higher powers,—the Browns, Horn Regulars, and Methodicals. She had just had her suspicions of some hostile or treacherous intention confirmed by her companion in arms Miss Leslie, and she was going to take the deposition of her *factotum*, Mrs Gregory, on the same subject.

Mrs Gregory accordingly deponed, "that being in the nether apartment, at the end of the corridor on the east side, and immediately below the late Mr M'Farlane's sleeping apartment, at tea with Mr Germanicus, Mr Horn Regular's own valet; the said Mr Germanicus, while sipping his tea, confessed and declared that there was some intention of putting Castle Regular in a state of repair, previous to the arrival of some expected visitants. That the

said Mr Germanicus afterwards declared, that there were more persons in the secret ; and that Castle Regular was only looked upon as a mere point of communication, or vidette post. “ That Colonel Brown’s orderly, while bringing out his master’s horse, deponed to the same effect, or nearly so. And that Lady Methodical’s postillion was heard to affirm, when charged by Mrs Horn Regular’s coachman with having no ropes to his epaulette, ‘ that he would soon have enough of ropes, and of every thing else, for that a d——d hanged crew were expected every day among the Lumberfields.’ ”

The deponer could also shew, that Hobbie Hardride, groom in ordinary to Colonel Brown of Bertie, likewise professed the greatest unwillingness to answer any of the questions the deponer and others had put to him ; and that he, and his companions in his company, took longer walks than usual, under the confessed impression that they should not return again, “ as long,” as they themselves expressed it, “ as a Fife leaf was left upon a Fife tree—a Fife laird upon a Fife brae.”

All these rumours, however, were only whiffs blown by a chance wind, and served merely to shew, that the grand transaction about to transpire, in being confined chiefly to the Lumberfields, was not calculated to produce any such very wonderful effects amongst the clans Methodical and Regular. It was reserved for a despatch received next morning from Miss M'Tavish to expose, at its source, the true principles and intentions of the league.

After various and many apologies for intruding upon her goodness, &c. &c. the politic Miss M'Tavish began to inform Mrs Fife, that she had just that moment received a visit from a friend of her's, now lady's maid to Mrs Augustus Maringle, a very intelligent and useful person, as shall be shewn.

The letter then went on to state, "that Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle lived together, *at last*, upon very bad terms: That the Lady had disappointed the family in their expectations of an heir; and that the gentleman had once more turned his affections upon billiards, horses, and cock-fights: That he would wear nothing but

the scarlet jacket of the hunt; and smoke cigars in the lady's best drawing-room:" In conclusion, " That they were now both arrived at G——'s hotel, on their way to Bertie, Fifeshire; and that Lord and Lady Aloof and suite were also expected, in three days, to follow, on their way to Lumberfield Castle."

The despatch finished by a pretty round assertion, " that the visit of Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle, to Colonel Brown of Bertie, was, somehow or other, intimately connected with that of the journey of the Aloofs to Lady Lumberfield." Upon this subject, however, nothing further could be elicited;—only it was hinted pretty broadly, " that the visits of Lord and Lady Aloof, and, in particular, of Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle, would only be extended towards a few;"—a sort of intimation which Mrs Fife was at no loss to understand as applying in particular to herself.

Miss M'Tavish finished with a postscript of two badly written lines, at the very extremity of the bottom of the letter, requesting Mrs Fife not to send any answer, as she was going to

cross the Firth herself, next day, in order to pay a visit to her friends, Mr and Miss Cat of Kirkaldy.

The effect of such a vast and overwhelming fund of intelligence, acting upon a mind already in a high state of excitation, may be easily supposed to have produced very fatal effects.

Mrs Fife, instead of descending to breakfast, or stealing a march upon the hen-wives, grooms, gardeners, &c. &c. &c. of her establishment, went back to bed. The surfeit which she had just received—especially after the hard laboured scraps of the preceding night—required some little time to digest; while her moral economy had likewise no small shock to sustain, in the scandal which had now befallen her youthful friends, Mr and Mrs Maringle.

Her natural disposition, however, was not extinguished; and she rung to know what her friend Miss Leslie might be about.

Miss Leslie, in happy ignorance, was about writing a note to her grand-aunt, after whose constant comfort her inquiries might almost compare with those of Mrs Fife.

“ Writing to her aunt, is she? Didn’t she send a message to her, and in the very midst of the party, too, only last night? But pray, has she had no breakfast yet?”

“ She waits for you, Ma’am.”

“ Waits for me! You may tell her that I shall not get up for a week.—“ Stay,” she continued, as her maid left the room, “ stay; I should like to know what she can have got to write about. Pray tell her, that as she is making use of paper at any rate, I should like to add a postscript:—But, Susan, recollect, you must make her state all that she has got to say *first*.”

Mrs Susan was met by Miss Leslie, letter in hand, who had just been informed, by a hasty tread of feet in the upper flooring, that all was not so well in the regions above.

“ My dear Mrs Fife, what is the matter?”

Mrs Fife answered by politely laying her hands upon Miss Leslie’s letter. “ There is nothing in that—nothing in *that*,” she added, hastily glancing over the contents. “ Here, Susan, put a wafer in it, and send it away.—Is she gone?” she added, her thoughts again

recurring to her own weighty billet. "Here, Miss Leslie, read—read this!—Miss M'Tavish has sent it."

"Very surprising, and very distressing," returned Miss Leslie, laying down the letter. "I feel sorry for Colonel Brown—an only child!"

"But what's to be done? what's to be done? what's to be done?" cried Mrs Fife, talking with rapidity.

"*Done*, my dear Mrs Fife?"

"Well, child, you *do* ask the most ridiculous questions. Don't you see that Mr and Mrs Maringle are going to separate? and that Lord and Lady Aloof are to have a part of the management?"

"Then Lady Lumberfield, Lady Methodical, and the Horn Regulars, too, must be in the secret. I rather think, my dear Madam, that the scene to be performed is one of peace and reconciliation."

"But isn't Colonel Brown going to marry Marianne Methodical, you stupid thing?" exclaimed Mrs Fife, who had no wish to see the plot so easily simplified.

“ And on that account he would wish his daughter to abide with her husband, I should think.”

“ You’re in the right,” cried Mrs Fife; who was by no means deficient in penetration. Colonel Brown wishes to get rid of one trouble, before he saddles himself with another.—I think I may venture to get up upon the faith of this.”

“ Ah, do, then; and if to-morrow be fair”——

“ My dear, I shall not see your aunt this season.—Nay, you needn’t look grave; for, if it should cost me ten years, I must get this mixed-up mish-mash of the Browns, Lumberfields, Regulars, Methodicals—Gracious! I shall never get through the list—unriddled and unmasked. And the very first thing I shall do, when I get down stairs, will be to despatch corps of observation, who will station themselves in the very centre of operations.—That poor weaver woman’s callants seem to me admirably suited for such a service.”

“ Mrs Fife?”

“ Why, my dear, what can make you stare so? it is their own doing. Witness the trick they have put upon us by their pretended anxiety to have us at their places while the fine weather lasted. Really, I can never thank Miss M‘Tavish enough for her attention. By the bye, what’s that she says in her postscript? —Eh! staying with Mr and Miss Cat at Kirkaldy? You know the meaning of her telling me that, I suppose?”

Miss Leslie confessed herself rather at a loss.

“ Well, it doesn’t signify; she only wished to make her landing at Kirkaldy an excuse for taking possession of Fife-hall; though I do not by any means look upon Eliza M‘Tavish as an impudent person.”

“ O, not impudent, surely.”

“ Well, I dare say no. But you see, from the temper of the people in the west, how cautious I must be of keeping any but the better sort of folks about me.”

“ Such as me, I suppose,” said Miss Leslie, smiling.

“ You ! Why they have found fault with you till they have tired themselves :—your friend, Mrs Maringle, amongst the rest.”

“ Well, they thought themselves in the right ; and perhaps they are so.”

“ O, yes ; I suppose you would find an excuse for them if they should take it into their heads to send us both to Coventry—You know the meaning of that term, don’t you ? But don’t talk to me any more, child. You must find out the gardener, and hear what he has got for me to-day. I think a few early grapes, and some cucumbers, will make a very nice little present for Miss M’Tavish. And now, since I have got dressed, I will go down and inquire about these matters myself : in particular, the fry that I intend to despatch over the country to look after the gentry of the west of Fife. Only, Mrs Gregory must appear for me when the important moment comes. How little suffices, my dear Sophia ! to overthrow the most deep-laid intentions ! And these silly Methodicals amongst the rest—Really I think Colonel Brown, bad as he is, too good for them.”

CHAPTER IV.

“ A selfish consideration of her own convenience, and a straining
at gnats.” *Rich and Poor.*

“ STOP!—We are away without the imperial,” exclaimed a young gentleman of very elegant tournure, putting his head, face upwards, out of a carriage, which had already begun to move from the door of G——’s Hotel.—“ O, I see we have got it—get on.” And the crowd of waiters, hostlers, &c. &c. &c. were suffered, a second time, to disperse.

“ It might have been forgot, though,” he added, putting his arm into a holder of the carriage.—“ How often has he been cursed, I wonder, who invented marriage?”

“ Repenting once more of being married, Gustus, I fancy,” said Mrs Maringle, who was

sufficiently cunning, and who had observed the motion of his lips to continue after having settled the affair of the Imperial. “ Well, I shall always feel happy if I can travel with four horses.”

“ My dear, you are *always* content. For instance, what I felt last night was decidedly a symptom of apoplexy; and when I found myself grow cold and shiver, and my sight begin to darken, you merely said, you were happy it was no worse.”

“ Well, and was it not lucky that it was no worse ?”

“ My dear, you will never understand: I tell you, I required sympathy;—sympathy at the moment—sympathy when I recovered.

“ Sympathy, Mr Maringle! Are not we married ?”

“ O yes, I had forgot; we *are* married:” and the gentleman inwardly, and most devoutly, congratulated himself on the little possibility there was—do what he pleased—of ever breaking his wife’s heart.

“ But really, my love, I had no idea that you

had been so ill," cried Mrs Maringle, throwing a glance of cold triumph over a chariot and pair which they now passed in ascending the first steep hill on the road to Queensferry, and leaning herself still more contentedly back in her seat.

"Well, my dear, I don't think these roads are calculated to make me any better. Now, look forward, did you ever see such hills?"

"Worse and worse, to be sure. What could all our county people mean, by crying up this road as a panorama?"

"Neither their crying it up nor their crying it down was of any use," rejoined the gentleman; "they could never deny, that the landscape on every side was both cold and bold. Are you agreeable, my dear?"

"Why, I certainly agree with you,—now that I have seen it,—for whenever we used to come this way, I generally shut my eyes all the way from Queensferry to Queensferry-street."

"A very excellent plan. But I see they have given us a bit of new road. It travels easy, too, and, with a little more shelter, might do very well. You know the Bath road, don't you?"

“The Bath road? O yes.—But pray, my love, sit a little to a side, if you please. You are coming upon the velvet of my manteau.”

“D——n manteaux!” muttered the gentleman in response.

And Mr and Mrs Maringle feeling themselves now, agreeably to the hints delivered, a little fagged, composed themselves to rest in peaceful, though not sleepful monotony, till aroused, half an hour afterwards, by the necessity of disembarking at the door of the Newhall’s Inn, to await their passage by the earliest crossing boat.

“There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar.”

Certainly the rolling sounds of ocean, like music, serve to animate the less majestic features of surrounding nature; and, as the winds and surges sweep along that short ravine of waters which separates the Isle of Garvie from the opposite coast, we have felt in its force the

influence of that music which so mysteriously harmonizes with the exterior objects of sight. —Such, at least, were the impressions we ourselves received, when, in one of the days of the autumnal equinox, we first committed ourselves to the mercy of one of those scooped-out shells, which, but a few years ago, constituted the sole and only means of conveyance.

If, however, we ever experienced any sensations of inconvenience or uneasiness at the idea of embarking in a voyage, which, at one time, was half reckoned dangerous, we were as often very amply recompensed by the contemplation of the scene itself.

Even while seated at the windows of our inn could we perceive the bold outline of the opposite coast, with the skeleton-castle of Rosyth—which remembered the days of Wallace; contemplate the waters again extending back to the westward; and count the waves as they leapt and dashed against the torn sides of Inch-Garvie, and the rock-fenced promontories of the neighbouring shore!—while our more immediate presence was invaded by the tumult of human

life; the bustle of constant arrivals and departures; calculations on the time that must be lost in waiting, or had been spent on the road; and by the noisy resolutions of some ‘out and out’ Gourmands, determined to make the said Hostelry their abode for the night.

We recollect, too, the difficulty that was frequently experienced in getting the multitude of horses embarked; the hurling of carriages and servants upon the pier; the air of hurry and importance with which travellers of rank seemed to be invested, when they were proudly announced by the surrounding canaille as on their way to Donibristle or Bertie-Castle, Fife-shire, —— palace, Perthshire; or, should there be a due accompaniment of dogs, guns, tumbrils, jaunting cars, &c. &c., &c. to my Lord ——’s, or his Grace of ——’s shooting quarters in the north;—enhanced, too, by the dangers of the road they had just travelled, and by their expressed desire to run on so many more stages that very night.

Things however were beginning to be managed much more quietly—thanks to the inter-

vention of steam ; and Mr and Mrs Maringle were left to parade this time upon the beach, without having perhaps a single being to admire them. But it was not yet the posting season ; and the parties, though suffering much inconvenience from the heat, were content to keep within their own three-window'd apartment.

To expedite matters a little, however, Mr Maringle went below.

Mrs Maringle seized the opportunity, and rung for her maid.

“ Don't you think the sea looks very squally, Maria ? ”

“ O, terribly ! ” answered Maria ; who had staid rather a little too long with Miss M'Tavish on the preceding night.

“ Then you must just tell him you are frightened, and will not go. You know, Maria, I must never oppose what he says, after the story of the red coat.”

“ But he will take me for a mad woman, Ma'am.”

“ O, never fear for that : But quick, go and stop him on the stairs—I hear him coming up.”

To clear up this mysterious concert, we must here inform our readers that Mrs Maringle had a mind to go on to Stirling. Her husband was in the habit of passing several hours every day on horseback, and, of course, in the habit of leaving her to herself. She was now, therefore, inclined to take advantage of her present opportunity to scour the country; and, as the part she was about to act at Lumberfield Castle rendered her opinion of some importance at this juncture, she did not doubt but that she should be able, with a little manœuvring, to effect her purpose. Her talent in strategie had not very long to wait for an opportunity of exerting itself.

“ My dear, that girl Maria is certainly mad !
—the finest day I ever saw in my life——

“ Take down that carriage, you fellows, there,” added Mr Maringle, throwing open a window of the apartment.—“ And, do you hear, take care that the vessel’s tackle doesn’t touch her paint.—I see they are just ready to start, my love.”

“ Stay, my dear, my gloves are in it ; and you know I can’t walk down without gloves.”

“ Well, I shall order them to be brought up.”

“ O, my dear, pray don’t allow any of these men to touch my gloves.—O yes,” continued Mrs Maringle, as her husband called on the men to halt ; “ pray, tell them to stop till I send Maria in search of them : I *hope* she is pleased with her journey.”

“ You *hope* she is pleased with her journey, Mrs Maringle ?”

“ Yes, I do ; for if she is not”——and Mrs Maringle finished the important sentence by a still more important shake of her head.

“ Why, my dear, I really believe you to be as bad as the girl herself.”

“ *Bad*, Mr Maringle ! is she really ill ?”

“ She is out of her senses, I believe.”

“ Out of her senses ! Pray, my dear, explain if you please.”

“ Why, then, she insists upon being drowned ; and will have it that we must accompany her.”

“ Then, my love, we *must* accompany her.”

“ Wife,” said Mr Maringle, in a sort of good-humoured ill-nature, “ are not you bound to obey your husband ?”

“ Well, my dear, I know you have great reason to feel angry; but nevertheless I must frankly acknowledge, that I really dare not venture to distress Maria. Her timidity is excessive; and should any mischief occur, it is *I* that should bear the burden of it. Positively I think you must just continue your voyage by land.”

“ What ! turn up by Linlithgow, and travel round sixty miles of country, when ten minutes may do the business? Really, my love, I think you might have had more important considerations in your brain than the whims of a squeamish waiting-maid. *Why, my dear Cecilia, we should certainly get ourselves caricatured, were we to turn our backs upon so fine a day; and such a clear breeze, too, as we have just now springing up.”

“ My dear, you may do as you choose. I am *perfectly obedient*.”

The intimation of “ perfectly obedient” terminated the debate. The gentleman had felt the effects of just such another “ perfectly obe-

dient" in the affair of the scarlet coat; and he had his reasons, on this occasion, for keeping all such terrible resentments at a distance.

Fresh horses were accordingly ordered. Maria was implored to swallow a sufficiently refreshing quantity of wine and water. The postillions were put on high pay; and the party, driving like mad, galloped off in the direction of Linlithgow, Falkirk, Stirling, &c. &c.

Nay, further, Mrs Maringle put on the very gloves she pretended to have left in the carriage, while in the act of descending the staircase; and her husband was even so complaisant as to overlook the circumstance—in other words, to pocket the affront. In fact, he was not ill-pleased at this instance of her authority, since he was so soon to make her act the part of cat's paw upon a much more important and serious occasion.

"Do you feel weary, love?" he asked with an air of *tendresse*, as the parties, having dined and doubled the bridge of Stirling, travelled on through the smaller county of Clackmannan into Fife.

“ O, no; not in the least. But, pray, don’t talk to me, Gustus.”

The question, or rather, perhaps, the manner in which it was put, had served the purpose, however, of reviving her.

“ I’m afraid, after all,” she began, “ that we should have dined at Lumberfield Castle. You know we were expected.”

“ O, it’s of no consequence, my love. And then, every thing goes on so very slow at Lumberfield Castle.”

“ Lady Lumberfield’s ill health, I suppose?”

“ Hem !”——The imperfect articulation of this hem did not escape the quick ear of Mrs Maringle.

“ What ! is there no truth, then, in all that I was told about that predisposition to dropsy of hers ?”

“ My dear, I did not intend to shock you; but since you have obliged me to it, I must inform you, that Lady Lumberfield was given up by the faculty six months ago.”

“ Ah ! then, all’s right. I really thought

you were going to tell me that she might live on for another year or two yet."

"So she will, my love, in appearance; for hers is certainly a very deceitful complaint."

"Well, well, I hope she won't in the end disappoint us. It would be terrible, you know; for papa is by no means a young man."

"Do you know his age?" demanded the gentleman, who was not to inhabit Bertie till the said papa had also been gathered to his fathers.

"Going in fifty-eight, I believe."

"Then he has escaped his climacterick, I suspect."

"O yes; and he expects to live on to a hundred."

"Then we shall be very old by that time, my dear."

"Perhaps not; for we may both die out before him."

"Not *you*, I hope at least, my dear. It is a reversing of the order of nature, I should think, when the child never lives to put its parent's head in the grave."

"Well, there is some sense in that speech."

But I think it will be the better for us both if papa should live on to a hundred. He will save so much money out of Lumberfield Castle; and then, when people get blind and deaf—which they generally do about seventy or so—they seldom feel much inclination for expense.”

“My wife is a d——d deal cleverer than I could have suspected her,” thought Mr Maringle, while he replied, “With regard to all that, my love, we have nothing to say; the hand of destiny is not under our guidance. All that we ought to wish for at present is, that Lady Lumberfield may soon be taken hence, and your father, excellent man! set in her place. Colonel Brown of Bertie, M. P. as he may then be for Fife: Chief seats, Lumberfield Castle and Bertie House”——

—“Bertie Castle, my dear.”—

—“Well, whatever it is—will have a grand effect. Your relations, had they come in next, would never have been able to have shewn any thing like that.”

“O, as for my relations,” returned the lady, talking in a sprightly tone, “I care very little

about them. We have never been upon any terms with Sir Thomas Brown, who has a family of *some* sort or other, I believe; and as for the Markeilds, and the rest of the connexions, I should be very sorry to think that they should ever be in papa's place."

"And they can never interfere, I suppose?"

"No; if we can only keep away Mrs Fife."

"But what can *she* have to do with it? You have told me, too, that she was not *considered* by either the Lumberfield, Methodical, or Horn Regular families."

"Why, yes, my love; but then there are *other* families in Fife besides the Lumberfields, Methodicals, and Horn Regulars. There are the O—s, the A—s, the M—s, the B—s, the Largos of the Byers, the mighty Raiths, the W—s, and the five Lords. I am told they all take a pride in talking of that Fife-hall of hers; and moreover assert, that the county received its name from the family."

"From the Fifes?"

"Well, I can't state particularly. But they all agree that Fife is a very ancient family."

“ Family *name*, you mean, my love.”

“ But ’tis a name so spread o’er “ Sir,” and “ Madam,”
That one would think the FIRST who bore it ADAM.”

“ O, my dear, how you do tease me !”

“ My love ?”

“ Well, well ; perhaps it was I that was to blame. But, I tell you once more, that we must certainly avoid Mrs Fife.”

“ Why, my dear, her name is M‘Farlane : at least so I have been told.”

“ Well ; and aren’t the M‘Farlanes all very clever people ?”

“ Yes, yes, I know : But from a lone woman, like Mrs Fife, nothing can proceed that can very much disturb, I should think.”

“ My dear, she is the most indefatigable creature upon earth : And she has agents.”

“ Agents ! my love ?”

“ Yes ; papa has often told me about her agents ; and, would you believe it, in four-and-twenty hours, or less, she will be informed of every thing that has just now happened to ourselves on the road. Nay, I believe she could even tell what we are about at this moment.”

“ Ay !—Upon my word that’s very odd.”

“ Think, then, of the danger of such a woman’s getting her head into our plans. And then, she has become so popular for giving up that long slip of her estate to the road-trustees, and has got the name, besides, of being so very charitable and good-hearted, that really, although she is literally nobody, her influence may happen to go a great way.”

“ Well, then, we must be upon our guard, my dear ; for I see she is just the character one ought to avoid. Only, you know, it will not exactly depend upon *us*.”

“ O, I believe they are all prepared. Papa has been extremely active, and the Horn Regulars and Methodicals have such an opinion of him !”

“ But Lady Lumberfield, my love ?”

“ There’s no danger, you know, from a sick-bed.”

“ A sick-bed, my dear ! Pray, when did Lady Lumberfield take to a sick-bed ?”

“ Why, my love, didn’t you tell me, not ten minutes ago, that she was given over ?”

“ Why, to be sure, it is at present very certain that she must die. But then, as I said before, her *appearance* is so much in her favour.”

“ But appearance is not strength, Mr Mar-ingle?”

“ Neither do some diseases appear fatal, although it has already been ascertained what are to be their final effects. But why do you look at me so inquisitively, Cecilia? I am sure *I* can have no interest in poor Lady Lumberfield’s life.”

“ Nor any in her death, I suppose, my dear?”

“ *That*, again, my love, ought to concern us all. But, pray, draw on that glove upon that pretty hand—I do so envy that even the very air should woo it !”

“ Oh, pray, Gustus, don’t be foolish.”

“ Well, then, I must kiss it.”

“ My dear ! you are very absurd.”

“ Nay, then, I must seal these pretty lips, too, I find”——

“ August——But pray, my dear, do not allow them to drive on so very fast. You know there

is no occasion that we should hurry ourselves *now*. And I do so hate a long conversation with that tiresome woman Lady Lumberfield; with her pectoral lozenges, soporific gruels, and trash."

"But won't your dear papa be waiting for you all this time, my love?"

"My dear, why do you always quote papa? I tell you he's as tiresome every bit as Lady Lumberfield, in his own way?"

"Oh, not so humdrum?"

"Well, I didn't say he was humdrum. But military men, you know, are so very particular. And, then, though he doesn't just nourish himself so much as Lady Lumberfield, you never saw a man so pertinaciously attentive concerning his health.—My dear, *you* are not thinking of going into the army, surely?"

"No; I was not thinking, *surely*."

"What! leave me? *You* who have got so many friends, too, amongst the military as it is?"

"My dear, I could not *afford* to leave you."

"Afford! Mr Maringle?"

“ My love, I was in a Brown study. My thoughts were upon you.”

“ And what sort of thoughts, pray ?”

“ My love, give me back that white hand.”

“ Well ?”

“ Now, look up.”

“ I *do* look up.”

“ You see that sky—that heaven, don’t you ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Then you see the heart that can never alter—never change.”

“ Why, my dear Augustus, I had no idea I had married a person half so romantic. I really confess myself to feel quite flattered by the prospect.”

“ Well, then, look up again—to the right this time.”

“ Well ?”

“ You see heaven again, I suppose ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Shall I venture to *improve* your prospects ?”

“ O yes ; by all means.”

“ Shall I finish them at once ?”

“ If you please.”

“ Then beyond the tops of these trees you have the prospect—of Lumberfield Castle.”

“ Why, my love, you have even grown witty since your marriage.”

“ *Since* my marriage, Mrs Maringle?”

“ Why, yes ; I am sure you knew that I thought nothing of you.”

“ And, with these impressions, you *preferred me to all the world* ?”

“ Did I really say so ?”

“ Yes, my dear, a thousand times.”

“ Then, perhaps, I had not been very precisely aware of what I was about. But you know one must marry somebody.”

“ But you would never talk so *now*, my love ?”

“ Why, no, I think I have some reason to be content. And then my prospects, you know, have so much brightened, as you have just discovered to me.”

The prospect, then, so brightly developed, was huge, old, clumsy Lumberfield Castle; and which, had it not been for one poor tower containing a staircase, might have been, at any

time, mistaken for an alms-house. At present, however, it seemed more to incline to the properties of an hospital; and that, through the invalidish freaks of its mistress, the ponderous Lady Lumberfield herself.

That this hippopotamus-looking dwelling should comfort the sick, was not, however, more true than that it occasionally fed the hungry. The dinner for Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle, at half past eleven at night, still waited. The ponderous Lady Lumberfield was gone to bed; and Colonel Brown, aware of the indifferent qualities of his daughter and son-in-law, had also failed to produce himself at the appointed rendezvous. All, therefore, seemed rather to refer to the Aloofs; who, in defiance of Miss M'Tavish and all other intelligence, were expected to arrive on the morrow; and to two gentlemen from Athens, the precise object of whose travels in this quarter will be sufficiently explained in its place.

CHAPTER V.

“ The Bible asserts no vain fable when it says, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

Rich and Poor.

To find, in the meanwhile, some plausible excuse for so many active movements and combinations amongst the *Magnates* of, and connected with, the kingdom of Fife, it will be first necessary to adjourn, for a little, to that beautiful Champ Fleury, the so much, and so justly admired seat of the Countess Montgomery.

In this arena, then, of tranquil and placid delight; in the benign occupation of attempting to benefit, not the country at large, but the whole human race, were met together, alone, the Lady Juliana and her mother.

There had been misfortunes in Lady Montgomery's family, as there have been in every other; and something had also crossed the path of that

angel of gentleness the Lady Juliana, which served to sadden those hours of youth, in which the eager imagination, with anticipating wings, stretches forward upon futurity, as if to seize those joys and pleasures which fate, not time, reveals forever in perspective. The happiness of resignation, however, had still been left to them; and, with it, the more exalted feelings of humanity, kindness, and an inexhaustible benevolence. The days of life were, therefore, suffered to glide away in a sort of imperceptible tranquillity; marked only by the exercise of study, reflection, and the constant performance of good.

This peaceful calm, however, notwithstanding the apparent firmness of its foundation, was about to be visited by an interruption, the effects of which were destined to be felt the more, in consequence of its late state of blissful quiet and repose. Such, nevertheless, was the destiny of the romantic and beautiful retirement of Champ Fleury, when arrived, in great state and parade, the Honourable Charles James Ferdinand Frederick Aloof.

The Honourable Charles James Ferdinand Frederick Aloof desired leave to wait upon Lady Montgomery *en secret*: he had something of importance to communicate—which was, that his family had inclined him to marry; and that they, in sympathy with himself, approved in a particular manner of the Lady Juliana Montgomery, her daughter.

Lady Montgomery had not vanity of heart sufficient to enable her to triumph in this compliment to her daughter's supposed superiority; but, though not fond of Mr Aloof, she was too amiable, and too much inclined to assist in every body's happiness, to refuse to *communicate* with the Lady Juliana on the subject of his mission.

Lady Juliana “declined the favour of Mr Charles James Ferdinand Frederick Aloof's hand, as an honour which, very possibly, she did not altogether merit.” But, ever benevolent and kind, she took the present opportunity, to express her lively interest in Mr Aloof and his family's welfare; and concluded with a request, “that he would condescend to favour the Lady Mont-

gomery and herself with a few days of his company at Champ Fleury."

"Has your daughter decided in *earnest*, Lady Montgomery?" for Mr Aloof, though not exactly *sure* of Lady Juliana, was not very well prepared for any thing that resembled a positive and distinct determination to his disadvantage. On the contrary, he had hoped to make his own of that negative sort of refusal, which a certain *presentiment* had prepared him at this moment to expect. He put the question therefore with that warmth which betrayed how much he felt himself annoyed at the situation in which he now found himself placed.

"She *has* decided, Mr Aloof; and I know enough of the sincerity of her character to suppose that she will ever be induced to change her sentiments on this subject."

Mr Aloof, whose total want of sensibility and consideration for the feelings of others had for once led him into a net, saw nothing in this speech but a still harsher repetition of Lady Juliana's message; and he rejoined, with undisguised asperity,—

“Your daughter, Lady Montgomery, with all her good and amiable qualities, seems to possess but little gratitude of disposition, when she could thus so *easily* make up her mind to discard”——

——“Discard! that’s a very hard word, Mr Aloof.”

“It applies, however—your Ladyship will forgive me.—But I think I can discover, in spite of Lady Juliana’s inconsistencies, the true motives which *now* influence her conduct.”

“Mr Aloof, I cannot conceal from you that you surprise me very much; and, though I had hoped to have softened Juliana’s refusal by every consolation (had you really loved her) in my power, I must lament that you do not seem willing to meet me with corresponding intentions. But my daughter, now since it seems necessary for me to speak, has never in any instance deceived you; and, therefore, cannot justly be supposed to have ever acted with any design to mislead.”

“What you remark, Lady Montgomery, is true. But there are circumstances in the know-

ledge of every one, of which it were impossible that I alone should be ignorant."

"Mr Aloof, you still further surprise me."

"Your pretended ignorance surprises *me*, Madam."

"Mr Aloof, as a favour, a personal kindness—and surely I have never given you any occasion for resentment—I request you will explain yourself upon the subject to which you seem so very particularly to allude."

A dead pause followed. Mr Aloof was intent upon a communication which, as he knew it would prove sufficiently offensive to Lady Montgomery's delicacy, would likewise prove a means of punishment, in revenge for his own supposed affront. But the earnestness of Lady Montgomery's manner made him hesitate, and he merely looked the image of pride and self—again concentrated, again intrenched.

"Mr Aloof, I am happy to think that you absolve Lady Juliana of every motive but the right one."

The charitable construction which the Countess had put upon his silence, roused Mr Aloof

to a fear lest he should lose the opportunity altogether, of making both mother and daughter repent of their conduct.

“The rejoicings,” he said, “for a certain event, though not all over, must have been at least to your Ladyship’s knowledge begun.”

“I know of but one event, Mr Aloof,” replied Lady Montgomery, “for which there are, at this time, rejoicings. But as the event in question does not in any way concern us, I confess I cannot understand upon what pretexts you could possibly wish to involve either my daughter or myself in that transaction.”

“Your Ladyship has certainly answered as you ought, and as I expected; but you can never alter the fact, that the Duke of —— is now of age; nor that Lady Juliana has, at this particular juncture, manifested a desire to keep herself disentangled from all matrimonial engagements.”

“Mr Aloof,” said Lady Montgomery, considerably agitated; “I do not suppose you altogether the fool to believe, that either my daughter, or any body else, can have the power

to influence the conduct of a nobleman so entirely independent as the Duke of ——. But I can at least perceive, that you are willing to impute to her a love of aggrandizement at the expense of every moral and good feeling; and an ambition which, as it is founded upon falsehood, would scruple not at the means, however gross, by which it might be gratified. Is this your opinion, Mr Aloof?"

Mr Aloof saw his danger. "It is not."

"I feel obliged to you, Sir." And Lady Montgomery looked as if she were going to faint.

Mr Aloof became alarmed, and made a motion to ring for assistance.

"You need not," said Lady Montgomery somewhat recovering; "I am only too happy to know, that, in a moment of excitement, you ventured upon the suggestion of some individuals, who would be inclined to search for motives of interest even amongst impossibilities. —You will not think of leaving Champ Fleury to-day, Mr Aloof?"

Mr Aloof declined. He feared to waste any

more *bienveillance* in a quarter in which he could now only hope to be recompensed in kind; and he was in a hurry to improve his interests in some other direction.

“ You will not leave without seeing Lady Juliana, at least, Mr Aloof?”

“ No;” Mr Aloof’s carriage was still in waiting. His seeing Lady Juliana could be of no consequence.

And Mr Aloof went off.

This termination of their many attentions to the Lady Juliana Montgomery and her mother, caused the Aloofs to counsel wisely, and to reflect. But what was to be done? Nothing more with the Montgomerys, in that way at least. There were two more heiresses on the tapis. The first was Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, who was old, suspicious, fickle; who was never in one place, and whom the Aloof family themselves very much disliked. A striking and decided dissimilarity of character might account for this. Miss Hyndford was lively, bustling, easy of access; and always employed in making friends, from whom she could expect no parti-

cular advantage; and who, in their turn, were to receive as little advantage from her. The Aloofs, on the contrary, were not to be approached; but, when once they ventured, as in the Lady Juliana's case, to encumber themselves with a friend, it was their system to make the connexion a means of some great and permanent improvement of their interests.—The second heiress was a very young lady, to marry whom, the gentleman, and not the lady, must change his name.

There was yet another young lady coming forward, whom the family might be inclined to condescend upon. But she was eminently beautiful, very much beloved, the only daughter of a Duke, and of a rank that ascended high above the Aloofs, even to a daughter of the Kings of Scotland themselves. The assembly of the Aloofs was again darkened by despair, when the apparitions of Colonel Brown of Bertie, and his daughter Mrs Augustus Maringle, appeared to scatter light.

Colonel Brown had spent a great portion of the last ten years in endeavouring to be *more*

than a mere country acquaintance of the Right Honourable the Viscount Aloof, called up merely to be spoken to, and, when it was the Right Honourable taste, to be heard. Mrs Augustus Maringle, ever since the marriage of her brother-in-law with Miss Augusta Matilda Aloof, had struggled immensely to shew herself equally *well* with that family,—for the sake of appearance,—as her connexions the Maringles. Mrs Augustus, it was confidently asserted, would have no more family after the fright she had sustained; [for a particular account of this accident, see the newspapers of the day]; and time had proved this assertion to be the case. Mrs Augustus, too, though a good match, had only been favoured with an income; and the fine unmortgaged estate of Bertie was not yet given away. Colonel Brown, too, was curbed by no entail, and he hated his heirs; that is, he hated those who were likely to succeed Mrs Augustus in the succession. Would Colonel Brown and his daughter prefer that Bertie should go to the Aloofs, instead of the new heirs-apparent, the Maringles? No. But would

Colonel Brown himself dislike to have his life-rent of Lumberfield Castle and barony, the rental of which was publicly esteemed at seven thousand a-year? Colonel Brown *might* come into this; and his daughter, by a timely application of flattery, and by the implied promise of a three months' séjour at the Courts of St James, the Tuilleries, Vienna, and Naples, might also be won over to forsake the Maringles, who, in their own way, were to be reckoned well enough, but, in a comparison with the Viscount and Viscountess Aloof, could only be said to be "neither here nor there." Many other circumstances favoured. The supposed great West India succession had rendered the Browns rather a little more popular with the Aloof family; and, by some accident or other, the parties had met somewhat often of late. Lady Lumberfield was, at any rate, in rather delicate health; had the dignity of her sister Aloof's family very much at heart; and might also be gained over to disappoint the Aloofs themselves, and the rest of the Lumberfield heirs, of a few years' rent in favour of Colonel Brown of Bertie, who had

volunteered, and consequently expected, to live on to the decent age of one hundred. As for minor preliminaries, ample provision could be made for Colonel Brown's marriage with Miss Methodical, either by means of the West India property, or the expected annuity through Lady Lumberfield; while the mutual interests of all parties might be farther promoted, by employing the Messrs Regular of Edinburgh, W. S. and brothers of Adam Horn Regular, Esq. of Castle Regular—gentlemen profoundly devoted to high company; very talented, and very industrious; and very capable of putting “a face” upon every thing which it was their inclination, or rather interest, to approve.

The Aloofs, however, were not to disappoint themselves of the rental of the Lumberfield estate in favour of Colonel Brown; neither were they, nor their relative Lady Lumberfield herself, to make good the supposed recompense for the reversion of Bertie in favour of the heirs of the son, in preference to the heirs of the daughter. Lady Lumberfield was *not* in bad health; she was as well as ever she was; and

as well as she had been for the last six-and-twenty years at least. Lady Lumberfield was only lazy; loved composing draughts; and loved people, for the sake of their sympathy, to suppose her delicate—nay, even to suppose her dying. Her imagined illness, too, had sufficed to gratify her pride. Indolent, and indifferent herself, her worldly thoughts of ambition had been long since transferred to her kinsmen the Aloofs, in whom she again shone forth by proxy, and on whose ambitious disposition she had always had the fondest, the most confident reliance. It had served, likewise, to dismiss all those left-handed and inferior relations of her late husband, who, in the humbler capacities of gentleman farmer, country parson, and village bailie, were dispersed up and down the surrounding country.

It was not difficult for the Aloofs, therefore, by means of private negociation, to gain over such a character to their interests in the affair of the Bertie estate; and it was as easy for them to prevail with her to pretend to be dying, when her previous indisposition afforded so

plausible an opportunity for practising such a deception.

Lady Lumberfield, on the other hand, had no objection to allow herself to be thought really ill, when her doing so was to make her live on the longer; for the success of the Aloofs had entwined itself with her very existence; and she even resolved to venture on the expense of entertaining one and all of the parties concerned, in her own old vast Lumberfield-house. For, in this quarter, she could be ill without being absent; and deceive the better, by appearing to despise, and to disregard, all mysterious reserves or concealments. Her consent, too, to all these various arrangements, must appear to be obtained with difficulty; and with many a weighty reflection on the inexpediency of relinquishing a good income, in favour of a man who was likely to enjoy both that, and his own dear delightful Bertie, for the next thirty years to come;—a sort of purchase-money, which she got the Messrs Regular to prove to be more than equivalent to the fortune to be settled by Colonel Brown (independent of, and in prefe-

rence to all heirs henceforth born in wedlock, to himself or his daughter) upon the honourable and worthy heir of the Aloofs—their own dear Charles James Ferdinand Frederick himself.

CHAPTER VI.

“ The best of them is as a brier.”

MICAH, chap. vii. ver. 4.

It was not alone by means of a gossiping farmer's wife—who, having been born and bred up on the Fife-hall estate, had had her own experience of Mrs Fife's idiosyncrasy—that the latter lady derived her intelligence, respecting the tumultuous but splendid crowd that had now gathered themselves within the heavy walls of Lumberfield Castle, and the costly banquets that were devised up and down the country for their entertainment and amusement: on the contrary, it was by means of the general open undisguised report of the whole talking population of that part of Scotland fantastically called the Kingdom of Fife.

It had been Mrs Fife's first impulse, as grand centre of all those profound confabulations, to dart away, and, descending like a flash of unexpected lightning upon the Lumberfield junto, to dissect and expose, in its very vitals, the secret spring that formed the ruling principle of their proceedings. But a sense of decorum restrained her. She knew that she was *not wanted*; and her pride would not suffer her to implore a place amongst the inferior factions of Castle Regular or Methodical-house.

Her exertions, however, were not slackened. She had the art, like certain heroes, of multiplying herself by activity; and of neglecting no means, however trifling, which might conduce to the accomplishment of her purpose. Mrs Clattertrash, the grand ally whom the eventful destiny of marriage had placed upon a bare soil somewhere on the borders of the Lumberfield territory, wrote bulletins twice a-week. A poor widow, residing near to one of the Fife-hall gates, sent both her sons to the herding—in other words, sent them daily to watch the vast resets of Castle Regular and Methodical-house;

while Mrs Fife prevailed with her immediate servants to visit sick cousins, fathers and mothers on their death-beds, and good-brothers “hame frae the sea,” &c. &c., all which casualties were to be supposed to happen in the direction of Bertie; where, unknown, as they pretended, to Mrs Fife, fatigue, and more particularly anxiety, compelled the wanderers to rest—and gather.

These not unexpected machinations, on the other hand, Colonel Brown contrived in some measure to defeat or elude, by establishing a strict quarantine upon all persons whatsoever who should venture to approach within five hundred yards of his house of Bertie; and by ordering all travellers, vagrants, &c. to be strictly questioned and investigated, who approached, in defiance of his new-painted sign-posts, within the same distance of any part of his estates. The diplomacy at which he himself presided, from the very austere and reserved materials of which it was composed, he was still better able to defend and protect; and nothing transpired, in that quarter, to the uninitiated;

but mere details concerning the ordinary ceremonial of dinners, and *dejeunés à la fourchette*, of which the junto had already signified their inclination to partake;—events, however, in their way, which sufficiently puzzled the spectators, and in particular, nobody more than Mrs Fife. That lady had begun to stagger a little at the idea of a formal separation, effected principally by means of the usual cements of festivity and joy: Nor could she very well believe that the harmonious congregation of Lumberfield Castle could be really employed in one of the most painful, least regular, and least respectable or reputable obligations of social life—namely, a contract of separation between man and wife.

At first, she had been tempted to believe that the second or third day's séjour would have sufficed to disperse the parties; and that the secret of their dexterous negotiation would forthwith be, *pro bono publico*, openly and avowedly communicated. But the contracting parties had kept the field three weeks!!! Their internal transactions were still couched under a reserve, dark, mystified, and impenetrable.

Reinforcements, too, had arrived; and more, perhaps, were on the road. The Horn Regulars and Methodicals were likewise mixed up with this extraordinary mish-mash; and where, who, or what they would be at, Mrs Fife, with all her dexterity, could neither foretel, foresee, nor prevent.

Mrs Fife had seated herself upon a beautifully ornamented garden-chair, placed in a division of the Fife-hall flower-gardens, and which terminated a walk of grand and spacious proportions, that diverged, along with many others of similar dimensions, from a square marble column or urn, on which were inscribed several verses illustrative of the virtues of retirement and repose.—Miss Sophia Leslie, habited in an easy dress of white and green, wearing a large garden bonnet on her head, and carrying a worn-out parasol in her hand, had followed her example.

The elder lady awaited in much impatience the arrival of the every third day's despatch from her emissary Mrs Clattertrash, whose courier, dismissed at six in the morning, was

expected to accomplish his journey by twelve at noon.

At last the confident approach of one of the swains connected with her household, gave notice of the forthcoming communication.

“There, there’s the letter now!” cried Mrs Fife; laying her shrivelled hand with a nervous motion upon the arm of her friend Miss Leslie. “Go, go, my dear, and get it from him. And, do you hear, find out which of Mr Primrose’s assistants it is this time.” For Mrs Fife, like another princess of the east, was only to be approached, on this occasion, through the intervention of a third party.

Miss Leslie soon returned with the desired information, and with the still more desired despatch; which, in its outward guise, was clumsy enough; but, like the talisman which was to awake her to happiness, Mrs Fife appreciated it the more for being “like nothing else.”

The flitting of wings over head, however; the sprightly rising of the lark; the clear notes of the blackbird; the yelp of the peacock; and the

united chirping of a thousand other species of birds, prevented both Miss Leslie and ourselves from following, *en train*, the mis-spelt details of the aforesaid letter, sharply doled forth by the crimp inflated voice of the redoubtable Mrs Fife. Enough, however, could here and there be gleaned to engage us to believe, that—

“ The partizans met together in the castle of Wester Lumberfield were occupied, the morning before last, in what Mrs Clattertrash supposes “ reading a letter.” That, shortly afterwards, they were seen to disperse in pairs up and down the old Lumberfield gardens, with their box-wood borders six feet high. That some amongst the number were heard to express a great desire to have bad weather; and, that Lady Lumberfield had drained the country round of laudanum and Tollu lozenges. That, next day, the bad weather so much wished for having arrived, the whole coterie, as was supposed, had gone to sermon in Lady Lumberfield’s apartments; and that they were afterwards seen to shut themselves up in groups in different sized rooms, where, it is supposed, they all went to prayers;

and that the weather towards the latter part of the day having faired, the whole party, in high dress, had set off for Castle Regular, where preparations had been long on foot to maintain them for the night. That just as the establishment was moving away, there arrived a young gentleman, who was afterwards proved to be the Honourable Charles James Aloof; and who, having staid behind a couple of hours to dress, had followed at leisure in a coach and four by himself. That Lady Lumberfield's agent still refused to grant any reduction of rent for that part of Mr Clattertrash's farm which belonged to her Ladyship's estate; and, that the consumption of food by servants and horses alone, had served to raise the price of every article of provision in both that and the neighbouring parishes."

This official communication, so perfectly resembling some two or three others already received, served consequently to excite, without any way alleviating, the desperate curiosity of in Mrs Fife; and she continued for some time lost in silence, overwhelmed and astonished, as

it were, by the impenetrable degree of mystification that encircled her, or rather, that seemed to encircle so many of her fellow-creatures: Much in the same manner, we should say, as a cat when it notes the gambols of a frisk party of mice, whose motions, conveniently concealed behind a good substantial washing-board, leave her entirely at a loss with respect to the precise nature of their pastimes and diversions.

“Miss Leslie!” she at last exclaimed in a sepulchral voice, “what do you think?”—And she paused again in still more fearful doubt.

Miss Leslie was engaged in contemplating, and in occasionally saluting, a bouquet of flowers, presented her on her first entrée into the gardens by Mr Primrose himself.

“Well, Miss Leslie, I wonder at you. How you *do* run after trifles!”

Miss Leslie laid down her bouquet.

“Have you no sense of reflection in you, my dear?” again demanded Mrs Fife.

“On this subject, I am afraid, it could do but little good.”

“*There*, my dear, you are perfectly correct.”

——“Praying, too,” she continued, casting her eyes languidly over Mrs Clattertrash’s letter. “Some of them are Catholics, I suppose. At any rate, Mrs Clattertrash did not say they were all praying when a pack of cards for the ladies was called for on one occasion of their meeting.—But, put away that odious parasol; it is really a fright.—Well, it is of no earthly consequence our thinking, or even speaking, any more about the business. Colonel Brown is still determined to be a dark lantern, and the Aloofs are, by all accounts, still more so.—But, perhaps, Lady Lumberfield may be dying all this time.”

“Or, perhaps,” ventured Miss Leslie, “she is going to be married.”

“Married! Pray, whom should she marry, child?”

“She should marry old General Slopdish, who manufactures so many caudles for her. But at present, perhaps, a Colonel might serve her as well.”

“What! marry Colonel Brown!!! But how

dare you nickname old General Cook ? I really think you're turning as bad 's Mrs Maringle."

" Thank you, my dear Mrs Fife."

" Thank me ! pray, for what ?"

" For getting a wife to Colonel Brown, I suppose."

" Well, well, my dear, it's very possible. But, query—why should he summon so many witnesses to his courtship ? Or why should the Aloofs, and their daughter Mrs Maringle the elder, appear so pleased, when they must be the victims of such a match ? And to marry—— Oh ! these chatter-chattering birds !——a sick wife !"

" Possibly he hopes to outlive her. A dark lantern shews far in the dark."

" It would require the light of the sun, and the moon added to it, to see to deceive the Aloofs in, my dear. The Aloofs are as suspicious as the Browns are cunning ; and they are much more greedy—which will astonish you."

" Well, the open air is fit ground for a discussion on metaphysics ; possible impossibilities to begin with."

“ Natural philosophy first, however.—Do you hear?—Chirp ! chirp ! chirp !——For mercy’s sake ! cry on some of them to drive these horrid sparrows away from our heads.”

“ That *would* be impossible, my dear Mrs Fife.”

“ Well, I dare say they have, as you would say, their use ;—for don’t you think the men look at us as if they were listening sometimes ?”

“ O gracious ! I hope not.”

“ My dear, are you afraid ?”

“ Not in the least.”

“ What ! are you *never* afraid ?”

“ O, my dear Madam, like every body else, oftener than I would wish ; and oftener than there is sometimes need for.”

“ Ay ! why, really one would suppose that you had got an additional tongue in your head to-day. But, pray, when was you last afraid, tell me that ?”

“ ’Tis of little consequence, I should think.”

“ Well, my dear, as my mother used to say of me, you are really forward—forward grown, I mean.”

“ Now, my own good kind Mrs Fife, I only spoke to divert you.” And she threw both arms affectionately round the old lady’s neck.

“ So, so, so, so, so ; well, well, never mind.—I wonder what was acted at Castle Regular the other day. Little Jamie Briskbody confirms all that good exemplary Mrs Clattertrash has mentioned in her letter. Did I tell you I had seen him?”

“ No, my dear Mrs Fife. But I suppose you were satisfied?”

“ Satisfied ! I told him I had heard of their being there, before I had heard of his coming back ; and then despatched him away again to hear what they said—The Methodicals were there, and that lump of delirium, Miss Antoinette.” And the two ladies now entered into a very eager and animated debate, in order that they might be the better able to ascertain what the Methodicals had to do with the junto at Lumberfield ; and, whether or not Miss Methodical’s marriage with Colonel Brown might not have already perhaps taken place.

Again, however, Mrs Fife returned to her first

source of intelligence, Miss M'Tavish, who had written once more on the receipt of the vegetables, grapes, &c.; having corresponded all the while with her friend Betty—feloniously called Maria—Wade, at present in the train of the noblesse assembled at Lumberfield Castle; and in whose second Byble mention was made of *more* quarrels between the amiable Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle; between whom, again, Colonel Brown seemed obviously to interfere, by constantly consulting with his daughter; while the gentleman's family, on the other hand, seemed equally eager to advise with him: "That Lady Lumberfield lay constantly in bed; and that Mrs Maringle from some unaccountable cause, had thought proper, with general consent, to occupy her place."

Miss M'Tavish had concluded her letter with a whole page of thanks for the present of fruit, &c.—a sort of compliment which had induced Mr and Miss Cat to request her to remain with them so long as her correspondent resided at Lumberfield Castle, or her friends kept the field at Fife-hall.

So many various and inexhaustible subjects of discussion had at length wearied and overwhelmed Mrs Fife and her companion, who, as the day advanced, fell both into a still and deep reverie, which the increasing heat of the morning converted by degrees into a sort of morbid stupor. Mrs Fife's eyes, however, still wandered, though almost unconsciously, over the visible expanse of her domain; while those of her lovely companion were bent, half-closed, upon her beautiful bouquet; save where some happy humming insect, dancing gaily in the sun, contrived to steal a wandering glance; and, at the same time, to disturb the plaintive, yet half-mysterious character of her thoughts.

Even gentle dreams had begun to make away with the slumbering faculties of the pair, and a drowsy sleep to hover upon their eye-lids, when, in the wandering confusion of her imagination, Mrs Fife espied a band of figures, like the procession of fairies in a summer evening's dream, pass on in quiet array, through amidst the flowery paths of her garden, and

advance upon the walk that led to the bower where she and her friend now reposed.

“ Oh ! these Browns ! these Regulars ! these Methodicals ! ” mumbled Mrs Fife in a voice of half-slumbering half-awakening despair : “ I even think I see them now ! ”

No speckled butterfly had lighted on the flowers which her lily hand now scarcely retained ; the birds were quiet above, and no buzzing droning bee was again disturbing the blue air in its flight—Miss Leslie, instead of raising her now closing eyes, merely answered by a sigh.

“ Yes, Sophia, it’s all illusion—all illusion. I have begun to think too much of this business ; and the sun’s fierce light is beginning to disturb my sight, I suspect. Shade me—shade me with the parasol ! ”

Miss Leslie, without altogether comprehending, in her abstraction, what was meant, made a languid effort to raise the parasol ; and in the attempt the article in question fell, with a smart rustle, amongst the brittle gravel at their feet.

At this unexpected clash, so inimical to a

state of gentle reverie and repose, both ladies started awake; and, before them, started up the undefinable object of their cogitations—the mysterious and incomprehensible Lumberfield junto itself.

Mrs Fife gave a quick succession of nimble active shrieks; while Miss Leslie uttered one feeble supplicating cry, which sounded very much like *help*. The invaders hastily opened their ranks to ascertain the cause of danger; and the dreaming beauties of the garden found themselves at once surrounded and enclosed by the important persons of Lord and Lady Aloof; the Honourable Mr Charles James Aloof, and his sister; Lady Lumberfield in her shawls and happs, and leaning upon the slender arm of Mr Augustus Maringle; Sir Henry and Lady Maringle, who had arrived at Lumberfield in order to counteract, if possible, the preponderating influence caused by the pre-arrival of the Honourable Charles James Aloof; Miss Methodical, and the two little Misses Horn Regular; Colonel Brown, and his

daughter Mrs Maringle; and Mademoiselle Antoinette.

The Aloofs had expressed an inclination—*only* an inclination—to see Fife-hall, of which they had somewhere or other heard so much. Lady Lumberfield was anxious for any thing in the shape of variety; and Colonel Brown was at all times sufficiently desirous to gratify his right honourable friends, of whose presence in the country he knew Mrs Fife to be already informed.—In order, however, the better to shelter themselves from the inquisitorial jurisdictions of the place, the party had proceeded *en masse*.

The success of the plan justified the prudence of their expectations. Mrs Fife, like another fox in the mouth of the hounds, could only resign herself, *with* a struggle, to her fate. In the meantime, the ladies preferred inquiries; the gentlemen complimented; and a gabble ensued that would have out-cackled the sixteen geese that were said to have saved the Capitol.

It was in the midst of this civil and military artillery, that the now united troops, under incessant discharges, began their march towards

Fife-hall; a station which they on their first arrival had slighted, on learning the destination of its principal occupant, Mrs Fife.

It now required all Mrs Fife's activity, together with that of her whole household, to do the agreeable towards each individual of the vast crowd that had thought fit to inundate her territories as it were by surprise. The Aloof family, in particular, required consideration, mixed up with attention; and Sir Henry and Lady Maringle were personages who had never been seen before. The architecture, situation, and interior arrangements of Fife-hall, however, proved powerful auxiliaries; and Mr M'Farlane's repository did still greater wonders in the way of entertainment. Proposals were even made to regale the multitude with a dinner; and a request was very humbly preferred, that they should all return again on some future day for that purpose. But the first plan was not in the programme of operations; and with respect to the second, Lady Aloof had the delicacy to declare, "that it was impossible she could any

further extend the already too extended circle of her visits.”

Lady Aloof, however, expressed herself, in the language of dignity, “*satisfied.*” The productions of Fife-hall were admired; and those of the Fife-hall gardens were consumed. Lady Lumberfield hoped that the journey, together with the fine weather, might add another ten years to her life. Colonel Brown hoped that it might kill her at once. Sir Henry and Lady Maringle rather appeared to like Mrs Fife. Their son and daughter-in-law liked her as a butt. Colonel Brown and Mademoiselle Antoinette asked questions, to prevent questions being asked. The Misses Horn Regular romped like devils; and every one, in some manner or another, felt themselves gratified.

Mrs Fife thought herself satisfied too, but so happy an illusion was not destined to last. In the meantime, the invading party went off. Lady Aloof, Lady Lumberfield, Lady Maringle and Mrs Augustus, in one coach-and-four: The rest of the ladies, with Mademoiselle Antoinette on the dicky, in another. The gentlemen, upon

all sorts of nags, scampered after; with the exception of Lord Aloof, who rode in a cabriolet, with his feet on a cushion, by himself.

“Stay! stop!” cried Mrs Fife, drawing back Colonel Brown as he was likewise preparing to remount.

Colonel Brown knew what sort of torments were in preparation; and he made a sudden effort to get up. Mrs Fife, however, at the same instant made an equally alert motion to bring him down; and, under these two opposing impulses, the Colonel hung in air. His groom, and one leg in the stirrup, constituted his supporting angels.

“Lady Aloof wants you, papa,” cried Mrs Maringle, from the first coach.

“Colonel Brown! Colonel Brown! Colonel Brown!” was echoed in similar despair, by Mademoiselle Antoinette, from the second.”

“Why, Colonel, Mrs Fife and you seem to have got secrets to discuss,” was echoed by the horsemen at large.

“I shall just speak with Lady Aloof one moment, and return again,” said Colonel Brown, endeavouring not very civilly to get away.

Mrs Fife tightened her grasp—for with her it was a maxim, “that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”

“Shall we back?” cried Mademoiselle Antoinette, addressing, from her exalted place, the amused inmates of the second coach,—whose position could also, from the nature of the road, enable them to command the parties already on the march.

“I am so sorry for poor papa!” exclaimed Mrs Maringle, from the first.

“A capture! a capture! a capture!” cried the horsemen, galloping off after Lord Aloof, who, in happy ignorance, was heedlessly approaching the termination of the last approach.

Colonel Brown still struggled.

“It is in vain, Colonel,” said Mrs Fife. “As for *you*,” she added, addressing a detachment of grooms who still waited on their commander-in-chief, “you may as well go gallop after the rest.—Now, my dear Colonel, for the transactions at Lumberfield Castle.”

“Transactions! my dear Mrs Fife?” demanded the Colonel, now planting himself once

more on *terra firma*. “Pray, what do you mean, may I ask?”

“What do I mean? But come, quick, Colonel, confess. That rout there, which I can scarcely see the end of, do not live at Lumberfield for nought.”

“No, truly, not for nought; but for eating, dancing, drinking, feasting”——

——“O, yes, yes, yes; I know about all that. But what has your daughter, and her friends, to do with the transaction, my good friend?”

“The transaction—Mrs Fife!” and Colonel Brown stared in such a manner as to intimate, that, though he should be hanged for his silence, he was resolved not to break it.

Mrs Fife, like Mrs Maringle’s “perfectly obedient,” had had experience of this vacant gape, which pretended to wonder at what it was never to acknowledge; and which, under an aspect of helpless *non plus*, really mocked all attempts at further intelligence.

“You may go, then, Colonel,” she said, in a contented tone, “but—and you may mark

my words—you will never, with all your art, prevent me from getting at the truth.”

“ Every thing is true that has been told, my dear Mrs Fife.”

“ Nevertheless, Colonel, you’ll live to repent this.”

Colonel Brown, however, still upon the defensive, or rather the evasive, would not even inquire of what he should repent; but, taking advantage of his now recovered liberty, rode with speed from the house.

“ There goes a man who has not his match ! Here, Miss Leslie, give me your arm, and help me through these long slippery-floored lobbies. To bring his whole band of conspirators to my very house !—shew them off, too, before my very face !—Oh ! oh ! oh ! gracious goodness ! I shall never recover it !!!—By the bye, did you notice that worked frill of Lady Maringle’s ?”

“ And that fine shawl of Lady Aloof’s ?”

“ And those flannel happs of Lady Lumberfield’s ?”

“ And that frogged surtout of Mr Augustus Maringle’s ?”

“ And that coarse coat of Colonel Brown’s ?”

“ And those spread-eagle looking leghorns of the Misses Horn Regular’s ?”

“ And that plain-made pelisse of Miss Methodical’s ?”

“ And that desperately deep peaked hat of Mr Aloof’s ?”

“ And those nine coloured ribbons of that creature they call Antoinette ?”

“ And Lady Maringle’s filigree bottle of Otto of roses ?”

“ And Lady Aloof’s double veil ?”

“ And her son’s smart little foot ?”

“ And those splay ones of Lady Lumberfield’s, with her three pair of inside boots, like the inner coffins of some about-to-be-buried prince ?”

“ Positively the simile is correct. I never before saw any shape so exactly resembling a coffin. So square at the toes, too: and that Angola house-gown of hers, sweeping over it like a pall.”

“ She will coffin Brown and Maringle both, for all that,” returned Mrs Fife, with a sinister look.—“ Don’t you think this is a most comfortable sofa, after such a long walk ?”

“ Yes, very. But, after all, I should take Lady Lumberfield to be in very bad health.”

“ Then you are *taken in*, my dear. I made it my whole study, for two summers, to find out the exact nature of her complaints. And I find her just to be one of those sort of people, who are always making themselves delicate by over care of themselves ; but who are no sooner really ill, than they take as great pains to get well again—in which they generally succeed.”

“ But that purpled-looking face of hers ; and that decided inclination to cough ?”

“ Mere want of exercise.”

“ And that excessive debility, which will scarcely suffer her to walk ?”

“ Mere over-indulgence.”

“ But her friends are really, and actually, alarmed about her. Did you notice Lord and Lady Aloof, how they seemed to tremble for her sometimes ?”

“ All nonsense ; or, as Madrake would say, all trick.”

“ But what every body says must be true. And then, that remark of Mr Augustus Maringle’s ?”

“ O, pray, let me hear it.”

—“ That the company needn’t grudge poor Lady Lumberfield a little time in looking over the figures of your large screen ; seeing that she should do so *for the last time*, as he believed.”

“ But he made another observation upon her ;—did you hear *it* ?”

“ I think not.”

“ Well, don’t interrupt me, and I’ll tell it you. Are you ready to hear ?”

Miss Leslie assented.

“ Well, he said he didn’t think there was any occasion for their dragging her away to see Mr M’Farlane’s repository, since she should so soon have an opportunity of contemplating the owner himself.”

“ How very, very wrong.”

“ He *is* very, very wrong ;—for I question much but he will see my dorty friend M’Farlane long before her yet.”

“ Nevertheless, Mr Augustus Maringle is both young, and gay, and stout.”

“ He has too little of the calf in his legs, I suspect.”

“ More, perhaps, in his head ?”

“ No ; Augustus Maringle does not appear to me to be a *silly* lad. He seems, indeed, not to have talent, genius, and all that sort of thing ; but then his principles of self-preservation, self-love, and self-comfort, are so much the more perfect and undisturbed.—Did you notice what he said about the Honourable Mr Aloof ?”

“ No, pray what was it ?”

“ I forget. But I think I can mind what he said about his wife.”

“ And which was ?”——

——“ That, upon the whole, he thought she had turned out *as well as could be expected*.”

“ That was almost as droll as what Mademoiselle Antoinette said, when she told Colonel Brown that no woman liked to marry a man with a wig.”

“ Or, as bad as Mrs Maringle, when she said that Lady Maringle’s teeth were pretty good, *considering who were the setters*.”

“ Or, as ill-natured as Lady Aloof, when she said that nobody that had false teeth could ever be certain where they came from.”

“ Or, as mischievous as Mr Charles James, when he said that curious people were a sort of travelling encyclopædias ; too fond of small events to have much mind for great ones.”

“ Or, as ignorant as Lord Aloof, when he asked me to which of the Leslie families I belonged ?”

“ Or, as dull as Lady Lumberfield, who, when *I* spoke, never appeared to hear a word that was said.”

“ Or, as fastidious as Lady Aloof, when she wouldn't come within three yards of whatever she approached.”

“ Or, like silly Miss Methodical, when, on being asked to look at the four wonderful fans, looked at her watch.”

“ Or”——

“ Nay, nay, nay, my dear ; you may stop there. Don't you see that you have knocked me up ? You smile, you wicked thing you, for now you have got what you wanted. You will read, and sew, and write now, for the rest of the day I suppose, in peace. I really ought to be upon my guard, when I hear you pouring out

your remarks in such haste, for velocity certainly forms no part of your original character. —But hush ! I think I should like to repose myself on this sofa for a little : Are *you* fond of being disturbed ?”

This last discharge of spleen sent Miss Leslie away ; who had at last discovered the only innocent means of setting Mrs Fife for a few moments at rest.

Mrs Fife’s rest, however, did not, as might have been presaged, very long continue. She had begun to repent of conversations, in which she always gave away as much information as she got ; and, after a few rather active sort of dreams, or rather—if we may be permitted to describe things as we wish—dreamlets, she arose in half an hour, in the full and refreshed repossession of her faculties.

Mrs Fife’s faculties were soon again to be called into action. Messengers had arrived from all quarters, bringing the somewhat behind-the-hand intelligence, that the Lumberfield faction was on its way to Fife-hall ; and a still more

decided despatch from Mrs Clattertrash, which contained in large characters only three remarkable words—

“ APPREHEND THE WORST.”

“ All Colonel Brown’s fault ! all, all, all, all, all, all, *all* Colonel Brown’s fault.——Wait, stay, let me think. Could Eliza M‘Tavish do nothing for me in this business ? I know her to be fond of a little behind-the-curtain play at any rate. Could she not assist me in this piece of darkness ? Miss Leslie only makes an effort to be of use ; but Miss M‘Tavish would perform wonders. For instance, she could go and pay a visit to her friend Betty Wade—Could go in disguise to Lumberfield itself !

“ But then she might play me false—might be won over by that dark cavern of mischief Colonel Brown ; and might come back as a spy upon myself ! However, as the old proverb has it, ‘ There is na remedie for fear but cut off the head ;’—and I must needs have my ‘ tame knaves’ as well as other folks. M‘Tavish, too,

has given me many proofs of her great goodwill: And, now when I consider it, she would like Colonel Brown and his creatures so ill, that, should she be bribed over, she would, like the groom of a late sporting Duke, come and allow herself to be bribed back again. She has friends, too, in the very heart of the enemy, and I may yet crush Colonel Brown in the very zenith and centre of his glory! Let me think: No, enough; I have decided. I shall forthwith away to my *dernier ressort*; and there, removed from the prying eyes of Miss Leslie, arrange and digest the method of my enterprise."

This soliloque, which was recited, as may be imagined, much faster than could be read, was accordingly followed up by the *dernier ressort*—an old oaken worm-eaten room, the materials of which had been carefully transferred from the former edifices of the Fifes; and where, except in cases of fear or mystery, no human foot was ever heard to tread. Into this upper dungeon, then, was Mrs Fife by her own command shut up for the rest of the night. She had secured her dinner while apparently attentive to

the wants of the Lumberfield squadrone; and as Miss Leslie had talked of a campaign amongst the adjoining poor, there was little likelihood that she should have any further chance of being disturbed.

CHAPTER VII.

“ In political regulations, good cannot be complete, it can only be predominant.” *Journey to the Western Isles.*

THE Lumberfield faction had, by this time, returned to its own head-quarters ; and, after a morning spent in mutual diversion and felicitations, and an evening full of elegance and fashion at Castle Regular, were now dispersed in little caballing bands up and down the heavy Residenz of the still heavier Lady Lumberfield. Two of these mighty conjunctions will serve for an example.

In a small narrow chamber, communicating with the apartments which Colonel Brown now occasionally occupied at Lumberfield Castle, were seated on either side of an old Japan cabinet—on which reposed a spread-out bureau,

containing rather more than the usual *quantum* of letters, papers, parchments, and affidavits—Mrs Augustus Maringle and her father.

The gentleman wore a canary-coloured morning gown; the lady, the dress she had worn at dinner at Castle Regular, with the addition, however, of a large India shawl or scarf, pulled tightly over her head and neck.

“You see I have not been idle, Cecilia. Here are two letters: Shall I read?”

The India shawl made an inclination of assent.

“The first is from Dr ——.

“DEAR SIR,

“In answer to your communication respecting the nature of the patient’s (Lady Lumberfield) complaints, I should have no hesitation in declaring her to be in a very unsound state of health. I am, &c. &c. ——— M. D.”

“DEAR SIR,

“I have the honour to be acquainted with Lady Lumberfield of Lumberfield Castle. Her complaints have certainly a tendency to an as-

cites. The symptoms, however, may have varied, though they do not appear to have decreased. It has been always found difficult to calculate the termination of a disease, where there is no opportunity for witnessing, in a professional manner, its effects. I shall be happy to communicate with you more particularly when I have the pleasure of seeing you in town. And I remain, dear Sir, your's, &c. — — —."

"Here is another lecture, in the shape of a note, which I received the other morning from my own apothecary; and which I kept, for the sake of the treason which it contains, in my waistcoat-pocket. You shall have it likewise.

"MY DEAREST SIR,

"From all that you have said, I conceive Lady Lumberfield's recovery to be utterly, *absolutely utterly*, and *entirely impossible*. It is extremely natural, however, for both you and the rest of her amiable friends to desire that her life may yet be prolonged; and I dare say many excellent means may be made use of for her

relief, and perhaps with a little temporary success. Her disease, however, no human ingenuity can remove; and I would advise you, my dear Sir, as a sincere friend, to make up your mind as soon as possible to the approaching catastrophe. I know that I incur much and just resentment both from you and your amiable daughter; but as it has always been my disposition to be candid with those friends who have best supported me, I must give you my opinion as it is, and in fact as your much-esteemed letter demands.

“In the humble hope that you are yourself in the enjoyment of the highest possible health, believe me, my dearest Sir, ever your faithful and most obliged servant, &c.

HENRY JUDAS.

“To Lieut.-Colonel Brown of Bertie,
Bertie Castle, &c. &c. &c.”

“This last,” said Colonel Brown, with a slight smile of complacency, however, “you may give for curling-paper to your maid. The fellow, with all his professions, is only a profess-

ed humbug.—But what say you to these regular, true, and disinterested opinions of the Faculty? Don't you think them very decisive?"

"I could have wished them to have been rather more so."

"So should I, Cecilia; but the fact is, a man of reputation will not risk his opinion unless he is very particularly interested in the result. In the meantime, nothing can be more favourable than the depositions of her own physicians, friends, servants, and attendants."

"*Favourable!* papa?"

"Favourable to *us*. But did you ever notice that sick-nurse of her's skulking about these dismal passages at night? She is by far the most favourable evidence we have; for it seems Lady Lumberfield doesn't know, and mustn't be told either, that there is a person appointed to sit up and attend her all night."

"The Aloofs, then, must be the persons obliged, papa. They will leave Scotland; and I shall one day shine forth, under their particular auspices, in the very first circles of *haut ton*, both in London, Paris, and Rome."

“ You have gained Augustus over to your opinion, I suppose ? ”

“ O gracious, no ! I left him in his mother’s apartment.”

“ But he has consented to admit the Aloofs, has he not ? ”

“ Why, papa, so far from that, he made me press a sacred book to my lips, and swear to him, that I should do all that was in my utmost power to get you on the other side of the question.”

“ How foolish ! ”

“ Certainly, papa, it *was* very foolish ; especially when he knows that his people are *not* amongst the distinguées of our own old clumsy London metropolis. Lord and Lady Aloof, on the contrary, see nobody whose rank, be they who they may, is one grade or degree less than their own.”

“ My dear Cecilia ! you are still my daughter. How unhappy might you not have made me by preferring for a moment, in matters of consequence, your husband’s interest to your own ; for, if it be true that they got an heiress,

and a girl of family, for their second son, it is as true that we, Cecilia, intend to raise ourselves upon their dignity. I am now getting rather *passé*; and have no longer that *esprit* requisite in a man who designs to play a great part; and I look therefore to you, to accomplish all that my ambition so fondly desires. I have already, as you see, got you up above the Methodical family, and the Horn Regulars—for the Aloofs are proverbially a test—and I have a mind to see you still a little higher yet perhaps.”

“ But Bertie is such a sacrifice, Papa,” observed his daughter; who began to fear lest *her* consequence should not be altogether improved, when it was understood that her own and her husband’s power over that property was to be henceforth now and for ever set aside. “ And Lady Lumberfield *may* misgive, you know.”

“ It *is* a sacrifice, my dear; and one that I have long reflected upon.”

“ But Lady Lumberfield, papa?”

“ *May* misgive, as you say; but she cannot

misgive long. I shall apply the rents of her Lumberfield estate for the purpose of insuring my life; and then Augustus and you will have something at your own disposal after all.—But it is very late, Cecilia, and we have all had such a long day of it.”

“ Ah, yes! and we all pitied you so much with Mrs Fife.”

“ I am sure you did. But good night, good night, my love—And, Cecilia, take care of a *certain person*:—you know, a wife is expected to have but few secrets from her husband.”

“ I shall put an end to them all by telling him at once, that you and I are at daggers-drawing. The temporizing system is so liable to contre-temps—requires so much to be recollected—requires so much recollection. But, pray, don’t escort me any farther; so *much politesse* must look a little suspicious should we be observed.”

While these excellent specimens of God’s own image were managing how to enrich themselves with dead wives’ shoes, an intrigue of similar virtue and disinterestedness was *en train*

in Lady Lumberfield's own large double-door'd double-screen'd apartment.

“ My dear sister, you now perceive the good effects of allowing the possibility of your sinking under the delicacy of your constitution. The fine estate of Bertie, with its two votes, is about to be added to our honourable family ; while you, again, will have the satisfaction of outliving both Colonel Brown and his daughter. That sort of gentle indisposition of which you necessarily complain, keeps more determinate and dangerous maladies at a distance ; and as you are not by any means old, you may yet hope to enjoy a very perfect state of health. And should it happen otherwise, all we can say is, that as none of the old Lumberfield leases are expired yet, Brown will find himself after all very seriously disappointed. In the meantime, sister, you ought to send again for Dr Mixstuff, in order that you may keep him all night. The surgeons, and apothecaries too, should be made to act ; for the Browns, you know, like the Fife hares, are said to be very ill to catch.”

“ Nephew Charles James, pray examine these

windows," said Lady Lumberfield, coughing long and deliberately. "I think I feel a draught.—My dear sister, you must make them send me another bed-chair—this is by far too low, I suspect."

"Your cough really seems bad to-night, Lady Lumberfield."

"The journey to Fife-hall," returned Lady Lumberfield, suiting the action to the word. "But—Oh, this plaguing cough—somehow or other I think that body Mrs Fife always does me good."

"Look to the doors as well as the windows, Charles James," whispered Lady Aloof.

"She is so funny, so bustling—that, really—Oh, dear me!—that really it is quite enough to look at her. And then, she is so attentive always in her inquiries about my cough, that I could almost wish I had her beside me sometimes."

"I consider Mrs Fife a very delightful person," cried Lord Aloof—downrightly; who began to flatter himself that she, too, might be cajoled out of her estate.

“Much more amusing, certainly, than that creature Mrs Maringle,” observed Lady Aloof; “though Mrs Augustus is rather a genteel woman in her ideas. Colonel Brown’s manner, on the contrary, seems too much after the system of *I wish*.”

“By the bye, what you say about these Browns is all very correct,” returned Lady Lumberfield, gradually softening her cough. “And as I have no other interest”—here the coughs were renewed—“but to take care of my health,” encore the coughs,—“you may manage every thing according as you please. The Messrs Regular will do the rest.—Now tell me what you think of these cayenne lozenges—take some, Lord Aloof. I am very glad, too, that you have mentioned Dr Mixstuff, for I must have his opinion of this RHIJNSCH MAAGBITTER that the Edinburgh people sent me yesterday. You have heard of FABRIEK LOOTSJE, have you?”

“I should take it to be a very excellent thing, indeed,” answered Lady Aloof. “But, sister, we mustn’t fatigue you any further to-night. My Lord”——

—“ Now, I would rather have you stay,” interposed Lady Lumberfield, with considerable animation, “ I feel quite inclined for company.”

“ But, sister, you require sleep—require rest.”

“ O, no; I took it all in the carriage going to see Mrs Fife; and I dare say I should never have got on without it.”

“ How teasing!” thought both Lord and Lady Aloof. But, still intent upon the Bertie estate, they cheerfully prepared to sacrifice themselves and their comforts till half-past four in the morning,—the usual time for their sister, Lady Lumberfield, to fall asleep.

“ You may stay too, nephew Charles James,” added Lady Lumberfield, turning herself, with all the clumsy exertion of some stranded leviathan, into a new position.

“ I’m afraid he’s gone to sleep in that old chair, sister,” rejoined she of Aloof.

“ Poor young man!” and Lady Lumberfield continued to panegyrize the amiable and affectionate qualities of the Honourable Charles

James, now in sound repose in his own comfortable sleeping chamber.

“ Yes, I am rather proud of my son,” observed Lady Aloof.

“ And, for my part, I am glad to be of all the service in my power to him. Any thing to be a balance to that overgrown youth, the Duke of ——.”

“ That cannot be expected, however, for some time,” observed Lord Aloof. “ But, at any rate, should the irregular fortune of some, and the adventitious preferment of others, not suffer our future representative to ascend; the dignity of his manners, and the precocity of his judgment, will never permit him to deteriorate.”

“ You are in the right, Lord Aloof.—But here comes my barley-water, and the paragoric. I have changed, I dare say you have heard, from the toast-and-water and the water-gruel. And now, Mrs Nurse, assort all these straggling pillows; and hand me up the Spectator, Almacks, and the Magazine; they will do, I suppose, for to-morrow morning. By the bye, did

you attend to my directions about that squill mixture that came with the double refined liquorice?"

"Yes, my lady, and it proved quite harmless."

"I had it tried upon a poor woman," resumed Lady Lumberfield, "and you hear the result. I was sure that young man, Madrake, could have had no idea of its virtues when he insisted that it was only a decoction of wasps."

"A decoction of wasps!!!" exclaimed both Lord and Lady Aloof, stung to the quick, it would seem, by the mention of so unsavoury a salvo.

"Yes, a decoction of wasps. And that double-distilled essence the portable soup, a mere compound of snakes, boiled mice, spiders, and roasted hornets!"

"Quite fit for Dante's infernal regions. Any more such amiable recipes, sister Lumberfield?"

"O, yes; there was the analeptics, which he compared to Beelzebub's wisdom-tooth; and the opodeldoc, to a distillation of serpents: the pectoral essence, to water boiled over arsenic;

and the cough-drops, to the juice of starved toads melted in the rain ! He said, too, that perfumes made people pale ; and that great drinks of tea, gruel, and other fluids, washed people white !” -

“ I know nothing of that man,” cried Lady Aloof.

“ I am surprised that Lady Juliana Montgomery didn’t think him mad,” said his Lordship in equal scorn.

“ Don’t say he ever met Lady Juliana with *us*, my Lord,” observed the Viscountess.

“ In my opinion, however, Lady Aloof, I look upon her as the most imprudent and inconsiderate person of the two.”

“ Certainly, if we consider her excessive liberality and complaisance, we cannot call her *safe*, my Lord.”

“ And then she is so very easy of access, too ; seems to have no regard to what is due to her dignity, or the proprieties of her station.”

“ We need not go any further than her writing letters with her own hand, I should think.”

“ So far commit herself, Lady Aloof?”

“ It’s the truth, I assure you, my Lord ; and if Charles James had also applied in the shape of some paupering impostor, he might have been able to boast likewise of having been favoured with—Lady Juliana Montgomery’s *correspondence*.”

“ Nobody will be able to persuade me, however, Lady Aloof, but that Charles James made an escape ; such extravagant creatures are always planting their nets somewhere.”

“ Lady Juliana’s will never succeed though ; the Duke of —— is no fool.”

“ And living in Scotland, too.”

“ Why, as to that, they say the Duke is fond of Scotland ; would like a new palace, and would like to live in it.”

“ To be sure his Grace can afford to be supremely patriotic.”

“ Nevertheless, he may not afford it long. We shall see no more minorities in that quarter, I suspect.”

“ No ; I expect the next national minor shall be my grandson ; and I am happy to see that Charles James understands as much.”

“ A truly noble and glorious determination ! How happy I am that the match with Lady Juliana can never take place.”

“ Still, her fortune would have provided for all younger children, however numerous, Lady Aloof.”

“ The minority will provide still better ; and then, while we are here, there is still Miss Hyndford.”

“ In that case, Lady Aloof, there would be neither a minority nor any thing else.”

“ It does not signify : Miss Hyndford would make but a very *gauche* appearance at Court ; and by keeping shy, the family will get purified of all its decayed or fallen-back descendants.”

“ And then there will still be the enriched lordship of Aloof, the barony of Stand-me-off, Bertie, and part of Lumberfield.”

“ And then there will be Lady Maringle’s children, should Mr Aloof die unmarried ; not to mention Miss Letitia Alicia.”

“ We have seen, then, what Lady Juliana, with all her pretended manners and accomplishments, has lost.”

“ I have been thinking all this time,” said Lady Lumberfield, putting an end to their under-voiced confab, “ whether blisters from dead flies, or blisters from mustard-seed, prove generally the most efficient.”

“ Let us speak to her,” whispered Lady Aloof.

“ Why, as Dr Nondecide would say, much depends upon the particular nature of the complaint. But, you don’t mean to say that you consider yourself *worse*, Lady Lumberfield ?”

“ Did I speak ?” cried Lady Lumberfield, whose thoughts in general went no farther than the curtains of her own vast state bed, or the little portable laboratory beyond.

“ You talked of blisters, Lady Lumberfield.”

“ O yes, they are valuable things, blisters; useful in cases where it is necessary to counter-act a determination of blood to the head. But I don’t recollect what sort of blisters ought to be applied ; and I am in the same dilemma about two elixirs that were sent me the other day : The one is vegetable; the other mineral.” And Lady Lumberfield, like the heavy creaking of

some lazy, laden waggon, made a journey of two hours and a half's duration amongst the virtues of her much-beloved laboratory, till she contrived to stumble over her own kinsfolk, Lord and Lady Aloof, fast asleep in their seats.

“Amazing! it is not yet four o'clock;” and Lady Lumberfield rung up her nurse, and her sister Aloof's maid after her.——

There was still another band of conspirators, whose active vigils were necessary to the grand fulfilment of the *denouement*, and whose very industrious inclinations had taught them to despise that trifling gratification which the rest had derived from their trajet to Fife-hall. The Messrs Regular, the regular focus of all parties, were busy in preparing, altering, renewing, and revising, all those deeds, parchments, and titles, which were forthwith intended to “shew and set furth” the irrevocable will and intentions of Lady Lumberfield of Lumberfield in her own right, and of Colonel Brown of Bertie likewise in fee-simple of Bertie Castle, county Fife.

These worthies, then, who had the superior privilege of approaching, without permitting

themselves to be approached, were seated in remote obscurity in an apartment, through which other six must be traversed before the light of the seventh could describe the vicinity of the eighth. On this last occasion, however, the illuminations of the ante-room were carefully extinguished; and a further darkness was prepared for this far den of obscurity by the double-bolting of all the intervening doors. It was left, therefore, for us to be enlightened as to the meaning of all this additional security and precaution, by the following dialogue, umquhile maintained in one of the old galleries of Lumberfield Castle early in the morning of the morrow which was to decide so much.——

“Did he give the signal sufficiently *nettement* this morning, my dear?” said Colonel Brown in a whisper, as his daughter stole softly upon him.

“Yes, tolerably well,” returned Mrs Augustus Maringle, in the same small still voice. “But come in here; leave the door open; we can hear if any one approaches, and nobody will suspect.”

“ But that open window—are you not afraid of *it* ? ”

Mrs Maringle pointed to a cap with lappets, six shawls, and a pair of ruffs.

“ But where is Augustus this morning ? ”

“ He is gone down to the park some time ago—sent for, I believe, to look at a horse. ”

“ To look at a horse ? ”

“ I heard as much when his valet called him. ”

“ My own invention, Cecilia. I sent for Tom Megget’s hunter, that it might carry him out of the way—The dog, you know, will sometimes catch at his own shadow. ”

“ See, however, papa, that *we* catch at nothing worse. ”

“ Of that, my dear, I am more than ever desirous to be aware.—I suppose you know that the Messrs Regular have been at work day and night ? ”

“ Yes ; I was able to ascertain that. ”

“ Then this last is the fatal night. To-morrow they have fixed for the banquet ; and this day my veto must decide. ”

“ I thought, papa, that your ultimate determination had been already privately ascertained.”

“ It has ; and it has been the principal means of keeping the Messrs Regular so busy. But you know that my agents still disapprove ; and here is their last and final *ultimatum* by express.”

“ Well, and what do they say ?”

“ They merely sent me, in the true spirit of Lacedemonian laconics, the word **DISTRUST**.—Are we certain, think you, of Lady Lumberfield’s death ?”

“ Papa,”—and Mrs Maringle took a long breath—“ if the way does not seem safe, let us stop.”

“ What ! break off the conference, and declare war with all these people at once ?”

“ No, no, not that ; but I will go into fits, or somebody might set fire to the house.”

“ My dear, our *honour* is engaged.”

“ But if we are deceived, you know ?”

“ And is this, then, to be the end of all your machinations against your cousins the Browns and the Markeilds ?”

“Settle rather upon the Maringles; these people *must* be kept out.”

“And lose the liferent of the Lumberfield estate?”

“Nay, then, you must go on with it; and Bertie must fall to the Aloofs. Lady Lumberfield, too, has been long an invalid, and does not, like most impostors, wince at inspection.”

“But that letter—that single word *distrust*?”

“We *have* distrusted; and”——

——“These lawyers are the devil!”

“And, papa, as you often said, they love that nothing should ever be concluded without their assistance; or, as Mrs Fife would say, They love to drive time for the sake of a benefit.”

“And those advocates of distrust, it may happen, do not like to row in the same boat with the Regulars. It may be as well, therefore, to apply their own letter to themselves.”

“Just what I was going to propose, papa.”

“Well then, my dear, let us separate, as long as we are well agreed.”

“But Augustus, papa? You must know that while I was pretending to set up his interests

with you last night, in opposition to both Lumberfield Castle and the Aloofs, he was caballing for his own private advantage in his mother's apartment. And what, do you suppose, was really the nature of their discourse?"

"My dear, you know I could never succeed at a guess."

"Well, then, you would never be able to hit upon this."

"Indeed!—well?"

"Well, then, they resolved upon my death."

"Eh! what?" cried Colonel Brown in sudden amazement.

"My surprise, as you may well suppose, was equally great with your own."

"They hoped you might die, did they?"

"Ay; and they hoped that Augustus would very soon marry again."

"And what said Augustus to all this?"

"He said, that he was sorry to think there was no *immediate* prospect of such an event; but that, as men oftener lost their wives than wives their husbands, there was at least the chance of probability in their favour."

“ Cecilia, my dear, when the Messrs Suspicious sent me word to distrust, they should have mentioned whom it was I should have distrusted. How you astonish me! But, pray, proceed;—for I see you have got a little more experience in this business:—what said the father and mother?”

“ They promised him ten thousand pounds if he should succeed; and twenty thousand more should I die before him. For he opposed the hardship of his children by his second wife having nothing, while their cousins had, in addition to their own and their father’s fortune, also the reversion of the Bertie estate.”

“ Then, Cecilia, your life is no longer safe! But pray, don’t laugh so loud; and let me hear how you came by the mastery of all this agreeable intelligence.”

“ Well, papa, I ought not to tell you; only I may take courage after the stratagem of the horse. My maid Maria lay doubled up all night in one of Lady Lumberfield’s old dirty clothes’ bags that hung in Lady Maringle’s dressing-closet.”

“ Mercy ! what a contrivance ! But how did she make her escape, eh ? ”

“ She clipped through, what she supposes, one of Lady Maringle’s best lace dresses instead of the bag ; came creeping along the floor, while Lady Maringle complained of mice ; and let herself out, when she supposed both to be asleep.”

“ Well, my dear, I believe Mrs Fife was in the right when she said, that the virtue of a fox was in its colour ; and that some people’s cunning might be ascertained by their name.—Such another deception was never practised without the doors of a theatre, or a field of battle !!! ”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha !—But I must away, for fear poor Gusty be returned. You see I have learned to laugh since I have been married.”

“ Some people, Cecilia, are *never* settled. But you need be in no fear about Augustus. I am to have intelligence the moment the quarrel begins about the hunter.”

“ The quarrel, papa ? ”

“ Why, yes ; you know something must be

done to bring off Tom Megget's groom, and to keep me out of the plot."

"Deceptions multiply, methinks, papa. But how is your Mercury to manage?"

"He is to call your knowing spouse no judge; and contradict him flat at every second word."

"Well, papa, I never could believe you to be the incendiary——Stay, I think I hear the Messrs Regular coming. What a bore these men are with their before breakfast morning walks. But you go out first, and then I shall get along in safety."

CHAPTER VIII.

“ The strong must flourish by force, and the weak subsist by stratagem.”

Journey to the Western Isles.

It was late in the night, in the earlier part of which Mrs Fife had retired to her *dernier ressort* to cogitate upon the plan she should now in her extremity adopt, that a travelling carriage, thickly covered with stagnant mud and dust, was seen to drive rapidly through the gates—which had by some accident been left open,—and draw up before the lesser porch of the Chateau de Fife.

This carriage contained a female stranger; who had no sooner alighted, than, like the man in the iron mask, she was hurried along by a single female attendant, who had orders to see her secured in one of the most distant of

the M'Farlane apartments—the same once occupied as a sleeping room by Mr M'Farlane's deceased black valet.

Nothing in the meantime transpired, after this mysterious arrival, till about two hours after midnight, when a sort of clatter, like the sounds which sometimes proceed from the slight-of-hand feats of a set of Chinese Jugglers, gave intimation that the Mistress of the Chateau and the incognita had met.

The conference lasted the whole night; and, about twelve o'clock next day, the stranger incognita was again put on board of the same carriage, on the pannels of which the underdomestics of the Chateau could now recognize the pompous designation of “—— ———'s Inn, Kirkaldy.”

The vehicle, though travelling with speed, had hardly reached the boundaries of the western approach, when it was overtaken and brought back. An express had just been received from Madame La Comtesse Clattertrash, which rendered it advisable that the immediate departure of the incognita should be delayed. Some cir-

cumstances of an important nature had transpired to justify this measure, since it afterwards appeared that the incognita herself was also a principal concerned.

The despatch alluded to was addressed to the *Dame de Chateau*, and contained the following decisive and somewhat awful intelligence:—

“MADAM,

“*This is the last day. To-morrow the inhabitants of Lumberfield Castle will be no more.*

“P. S.—The Methodicals and the Horn Regulars return to their own homes: The rest go off by way of Queensferry, carrying Colonel Brown in their train. Before crossing to the other world, they all mess together once more.—

“I have no time to write my name.”

The reading of this letter, it is said, caused the *Dame de Chateau* and the incognita to embrace; and much earnest discourse passed between them in an under-voice. At last the political chieftainess was heard to repeat aloud the following injunction, just as the incognita,

habited in a brown stuff dress, and her dark face further darkened by a green gauze veil, took her seat in her car of flight :—

“ Let the terrible intelligence contained in this letter only incite you to new and more powerful exertions. I depend upon you. Should you not receive the necessary support which awaits you in the very centre of the enemy’s resources, and so necessary to our success, you must follow the different corps to the coast, despatch horses to meet me at ———, and thus by a dexterous effort anticipate their measures, and unite together at the very point where the enemy intend to refresh previous to the moment of embarkation.”—“ There !” she added, pointing forwards with an air of inexpressible energy—in imitation, perhaps, of Napoleon on the field of his last battle,—“ There, Mademoiselle, is the road to Lumberfield !—Proceed !”

She was answered by rather an ungraceful play of a coarse brown hand on the part of the incognita; the mixed result, we suppose, of great physical strength, and great mental and moral agitation ; and the child of hope drove off.

The arrival of Miss M'Tavish in disguise at Lumberfield Castle, was ushered in by the clashing of plates, glasses, finger-cups, wine-coolers, and wine-decanter; the clattering of thirty sets of teeth, the thunder of as many tongues; and the confused tread of fifteen servants, all desperately engaged in action; not to mention the minor explosion of small arms, such as knives, silver forks, and all the lesser *materiel* of an immense farewell dinner half over. For Miss M'Tavish, though in time, could not venture upon her entrée till the shades of night, and the shades of something else, had withdrawn even the dull eyes of Lady Lumberfield; who in a fauteuil stuffed with flannel-lined furs, now did the honours of her table for—as was confidently hoped, supposed, and alleged—the last time.

A female domestic, however, soon appeared to conduct her through the maze of this rebel rout; and, in the act of gathering together garden-bonnets, travelling-hats and shawls, soiled laces and morning-gowns, she found, in her mistress's own apartment, her friend Betty Wade.

“ Miss M'Tavish !!! ”

“ Betty Wade !!! ” and the parties after the sometimes rational inquiry of, “ Is that really you ? ” now seated themselves.

After much unprofitable palaver, broken at intervals by the arrival of different-sized trays, with scraps, sent under favour from the butler’s own pantry ; and, amongst other things, a full detail of the adventure of the dirty clothes’ bag ; Miss M’Tavish was at last able to ascertain, that her friend, Betty Wade, knew nothing ; and what was still more mortifying, that neither she nor the heroine of the bag could at all comprehend or understand what either of the parties, so rationally circumvented, had intended by their discourse.

The fact was, Colonel Brown had continued to exact on all hands the rigorous discipline of a military command ; while his daughter had descended to the more honourable vocation of a spy. The Messrs Regular, too, had likewise done much to maintain order, and preserve secrets. The character of Lady Lumberfield’s household was that of quiet ; and the rest had been frightened into secrecy by the often con-

jured up apparition of Mrs Fife. Under these wise restrictions, regulations had been made to dine all ladies' maids and upper servants at a certain hour, and to have reported, in the proper quarter, all conversations which did not turn out just so happily as might have been wished. Topics of business had also been interdicted at the dinner table; arguments and discussions from the drawing-room; and unless from that stray flight of Mrs Augustus Maringle's maid in the affair of the clothes' bag, there remained with the respective servants only an additional portion of ignorance. Miss M'Tavish could therefore expect to gain nothing personally in the way of information, during the bustle of so many approaching departures; and nothing was left for her but to rise from the side of poor Betty Wade a couple of hours before the rest, get four horses to her chaise, send four in advance for Mrs Fife, and dash on to meet that lady at the appointed place. It was not, however, her design absolutely to terminate the transaction by bringing a true report of her friend Betty Wade's incapacilities to Fife-hall

on the instant; but rather, by laying the sole blame upon want of opportunity, to adorn her adventure by a tour through Fife.

Determined upon this plan of operations, Miss M'Tavish had given orders for the Kirkaldy chaise to be in waiting for her on the morrow at the nearest village; and having herself passed a night of considerable terror, for fear of a discovery on the part of either the Browns, Maringles, or Aloofs, she again set out for the purpose of picking up her equipage at the appointed rendezvous. She had even time—in her fear of a further confinement in Lumberfield Castle, and of that solemn aristocratic silence which reigns in the night in a house containing an entire cargo of grandees—to interrupt the intended journey of Mrs Fife, or, at least, to intercept her at her own gates, but for that frequent mistake of obstinate people in an unknown place, commonly called “taking the wrong road.”

In issuing from the cumbrous portals of mighty Lumberfield, Miss M'Tavish found herself, like a ship at sea without a compass, some-

what at a loss. Her sagacity, however, quickly revealed to her a peasant of the soil, who very kindly pointed out to her the village of ———, the first on the grand route to that grand point of dispersion, North-Queensferry; and who likewise discovered to her a way, even nearer than any of Lady Lumberfield's old tree-shaded paths, by which she might gain the adjoining high-road. But as it had unfortunately been ever her plan to try the shortest way; as, *par exemple*, in Edinburgh, needling up one close, and darning down another, in the high pride of direct communications; and as, at this particular moment, Miss M'Tavish beheld the village of ——— far to the right, while she was now proceeding straight on the left, she suddenly resolved upon the longest of all unknown ways,—a short cut. Losing all sight, therefore, of the hamlet in request; meeting nobody who could be of use where they were most wanted; struggling to gain the main road without losing ground; following, while they lasted, the tracks of a cart; and pursuing the inconstant banks of a still more inconstant bubbling rill—Miss

M'Tavish, after long labour, and much misused time, found out that she was lost.

What was to be done? she must step another half-mile out of her direction, to get the advice of the inhabitants of the nearest farm-house; on reaching which, her short memory suffered the name of the village she was in search of to escape.

She answered the usual inquiries of, "Whar may *ye* be frae?" and, "Whar may *ye* be ga'ing?" by informing the natives, that the place she wanted to reach was not above three half miles from Lumberfield Castle, the residence of one Lady Lumberfield.

"It couldna just be Nether Dibble-dub, which lay south; nor Dirty-dribble, which lay north; but it wad and 'but to be' that ither reel-rall of a hole," of which, like Miss M'Tavish, they had forgot the name and designation. "And she maun now just gang *back* a gliff; having come gude twa miles, or thairabouts, owre far forret;" an intimation of its kind which Miss M'Tavish could very easily believe. At last, strengthened by a drink of excellent milk, and

further refreshed by the circumstance of having once more had human beings like herself to converse with, Miss M'Tavish resumed her journey, though now in decidedly a retrograde direction.

Miss M'Tavish held to the right—held to the left—took the second turning to the east—took the fourth to the west—doubled the turnip-field, and the end of the red-tiled house—crossed the burn by the first dale-brigg—saw Lumberfield Castle start out amongst the trees like a savage, sometimes in one part of the horizon, and sometimes in another—and, in fine, became more and more bewildered, wearied, and perplexed.

“ Mrs Fife will no more pay for those chaise hires, after this, than she will chase soap-balls in a balloon. And that Kirkaldy laddie, what will he suppose has become of me?” and Miss M'Tavish held on in the true dogged system of despair, impatient of a change—or rather, impatient of an end.

In her endeavours, however, to escape Nether Dibble-dub, and Dirty-dribble, she had also

shunned the reel-rall hole, towards which the natives of the farm-house had so elaborately directed her; and, in the agony of her discomfiture, she now made direct for what she supposed ‘a kirk without a steeple;’ near which she should probably find a manse; and there, again, a minister’s wife, who would ken a’ thing.

Beneath the walls, then, which concealed the kirk-yard, and which she had reason to suppose of a height altogether unnecessary, Miss M’Tavish sat down, for the first time, to rest, though not exactly to “rest and be thankful.”

Misfortunes will never come alone. Her repose was suddenly interrupted by a variety of most tumultuous sounds in the adjoining church-yard; and on listening with meek attention, her curiosity was gratified by such afflicting words as—“Pull her out, pull her out, I say. D——n it, man, can’t you pull her out?”——“Hold fast there. Now you may let her go.—You stupid ideot, you, don’t you see as how that she has not got any stays? She’s as dozend’s a rain-water cask.”——“Well, then, can’t you tie her up? Come here to me, Joe, and we’ll take out this

little tight bit thingy next. I dare be sworn I could carry her the length of the Ferry by myself. Here, you chap there, hand me the pitch-fork"——all richly intermixed with oaths, jibes, jeers, and what not, too prolix and too unruly to be put on record.

"Heavens almighty! they are robbing the kirk-yard!!! and that great noise I hear must be the rumbling of the safes!" and Miss M'Tavish, in terror at this change in the order of interment, began to pray.

She bethought herself, nevertheless, of the fable of Jupiter and the Clown, and the necessity there seemed to be that she should help herself;—and, in her vast fear lest their unhallowed plunder of the tombs might lead, perchance, to a similar depredation upon herself; and in the conceit, too, that they should find her no bad subject, she rose, though not very majestically, from her sunny seat, and—fled.

At a distance from danger, however, with a little courage to assist her curiosity, Miss M'Tavish paused to look back. Her desire to provide herself with a few more apologies

for disappointing Mrs Fife, induced her to do more; and, stealing cautiously round, she softly passed her head between the cumbrous folds of a very large door-way, which seemed to guard the entrance to this nursery of souls as well as sprites.

She saw—neither broken tombs, rifled monuments, nor ripped-up graves; but a stable-yard, into which had just been rolled forward a vast squad of noblemen and gentlemen's coaches, chariots, landaulets, and barouches; and which their keepers were now laboriously making to shine in all their respective lustres of silver, brass, and black; while a corresponding clatter of harness tackle, and bridle and saddle accoutrements, resounded loud in the adjoining sheds.

“Merciful providence! who owns all this?” and Miss M'Tavish presented herself for the purpose of being further instructed. The information which she received, however, as it was entirely disinterested, was not very much to the purpose. “This here carriage belonged to my Lord;” “and that there chariot to my master;” “the folks at the house (if they were fools) might tell

her the rest." For these same chiefs of the stud were not over willing that their troubles should, through any adventitious, or rather through any unremunerated means, be at this important crisis increased; while Miss M'Tavish, on her side, was not very unwilling, we may imagine, to abandon such unprofitable and corrupted sources of information.

To get to the house, in the mean time, she could be at no very great loss. There was a door-way of similar dimensions exactly opposite the one by which she had entered this den of the desperate, and which, with the assistance of a heavy road, overhung by still heavier woods, soon convinced her that, like the Roman mother of Coriolanus, though she had gained Lumberfield, she had lost her judgment,—for assuredly the kirk without a steeple proved to be no other than old everlasting Lumberfield Castle; that same venerable pile being destined, on this occasion, to display the gratifying spectacle of "a knowing one *twice* taken in;"—an event that tends to shew, as much as any thing can, how seldom we know for what we may all be reserved.

This sight was too much for Miss M'Tavish. She began to feel the length of her confinement, and what it was likely to cost. Those immense preparations, of which she had just been herself an eye-witness, could only refer to the departure of the junto *en masse*; and she began to suspect, that all Mrs Fife's attempts to anticipate their movements must prove too late, and thereby utterly abortive. She also felt, that after a rough nine miles' walk, it was idle to desire to feel one's self astonished.

In the halls above were assembled the objects of reverence; but despair had already shewn that veneration was a bug-bear—a fictitious sentiment, which could be dispensed with upon occasion. Miss M'Tavish saw aristocrats, like patch-work, stuck over the better windows of the house, and men of office, with deep contracted brow, dare the Intrudee to advance. But, *nil desperandum*, Miss M'Tavish heedlessly and fearlessly proceeded; applied the knocker lustily to the iron of the great open door; and demanded of the first footman she met to be

re-shewn into the presence of her friend and acquaintance, Betty Wade.

“ Call to-morrow, if you should happen to be passing, good woman,” was her agreeable reception when asking admittance.

“ It will be then at No. —, Abercromby-Place.”

“ Ho, ho ; so you know all about it. Well, then, she’s with her mistress, and cannot possibly be spoken to.”

“ What do you say, fellow ? Betty Wade not to be spoken to !!!”

“ No, not on any account : But wait there for a moment ; I hear Lady Maringle’s bell.”

“ He will come back to squeeze the money out of my purse,” thought Miss M‘Tavish ; “ but I shall try to prevent him.” And she pounced forward upon a large stone-flagged hall, solely ornamented with huge mis-shapen mahogany chairs, begarnished on the front and back with the broad-armed blazonry of the Lumberfield arms.

In this unlabrynth-looking inner-court, like the spectre-bands of Eblis and his infernal satellites, were innumerable figures rushing hastily

along, whose frantic and bewildered gestures and movements betokened, like their brother furies, haste, anxiety, and the fear of some wonderful event. Like that fatal irruption of pent-up combustibles which hurled death on the head of the elder Pliny, “there were heard the shrieks of women, the moans of infants, and the outcries of men. There were some who, from their fear, even prayed to die: many paid their adoration to the gods; but the greater number were of opinion, that the gods no longer existed, and that this night was the final and eternal period of the world.”*

No language, it is true, could express or describe the full force of these terrible effects on the daring spirit of Miss M‘Tavish, till, on getting a little nearer, we were allowed to detect, from the following cries, the true employment of the whole mass of diablerie.

“Holla, there! Holla, there, I say! What the devil are you about with my master’s box-coat?”

“Come, come, get on, my lads; I must have

* See Pliny’s Epistles.

all this luggage stowed away before either Miss Aloof or her Ladyship comes down. I say, my good fellow, can't you take my Lord's dressing-box up stairs?—Come, give us a snuff, Jack.—Here, Whip, let this second imperial go upon the top of the first; and stow away that hat-case up among the men's feet. But I must go and see what the dames up stairs are about.”

“ Stop ! James, stop ! where are you flying to with that band-box ? Didn't I tell you how you would crush it ? Here, give it to Lumber there ; he will be sure to hold it till I come back.—Was that Lady Lumberfield's bell that rung now, George ? ”

“ Lord Aloof says he must have the spencer, James.—What ! sent it down to the stables, have you ?—Here, Whip, help me to lash these lazy scoundrels up and down the house.”

“ Mr Maringle's man has taken away master's boots.”

“ Well, Tim, you must just ring him down for them again. Stay, take care, let that tray pass ; it's Lady Lumberfield's chicken broth.”

“ But the umbrellas ! the umbrellas ! the umbrellas ! ” re-echoed Tim.

“ Tush, you roaring wretch ; I want my mistress’s shawl.—Did you see it, Maria ? Ay, do, that’s a good girl, run and fetch it. And do you hear, Maria, bring me that parcel of combs tied up in the —— Pray, you fellows, don’t knock me over, if you please.”

“ Haw—yaw—faw—Come along, Jack, and don’t be heeding *that* caterwauling piece of squeaks.—I say, Whippy, not a word about the broken glass.”

“ No, no ; me’s speak never no word no more about none of your broken glass.”

“ Where is Lumber ? where is Lumber ? where is——Did any of you see Lumber with my Lady’s band-box ? ”

“ Yes ; I for one saw him sitting upon it.”

“ What ! upon my Lady’s new French hat ? ”

“ Well, if you had seen him you would ha’ pitied the poor lad ; for both went smack before one could ha’ cried—Jack Robinson ! ”

“ Pitied him !!! I only wish I may see him hanged ! But oh my lady’s hat ! my lady’s hat !

Oh ! oh ! oh ! oh ! oh !——Pray, my man, can you tell me the clock ?”

“ Come, bear a hand there, my lads, and tumble me that lot of greatcoats. Here, Tim, bundle off to the boys, and tell them they may have a quarter.——Curse that pert bit of baggage ! she’s behaved like a little gipsy all day. Come, come, stand about there, till I deposite this ton weight of sheep’s hides in their own proper place.”

“ Are you there, James ?” This voice alone came from above.

“ Coming, sir ; coming, sir ; com——
Holloa ! you there with the turnip-top, what the devil are you about with my best gloves ?”

“ Oh, James, James ! fly, man, fly. That’s Mr Augoostus calling for you, and Sir Harry will be calling for his own man the very next instant.—Are you Colonel Brown ?”

“ No ; I be’s the Right Honourable Master Aloof, Esquire. That be’s Colonel Brown a’ cleaning at his boots.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! But what sort o’ a kimmer’s that glowring about ? She’s no Leddy Aloof,

nor Leddy Maringle either, I'se should think. —Yes, sir; coming, sir; directly, sir; no, sir; yes, sir.—Now I must run like mad."

"Here, Lumber, give us a pinch. You and I aye ca' canny; it's of no use to rampage."

"Oh, but you *are* two worthless, good-for-nothing dolts. Here Joe, my man, that's worth four o' them, help me up with this portmantle. It seems a whole drawer-full of Miss Aloof's things have been forgot. But it's her own mischeevous fault, for not letting never any body come near her. Hech me! how I have pitied her own poor maid!"

All this fanciful chit-chat had been the conversation of a minute. But at this important moment the Babel tongues of the rout were drowned in the repeated peals of a vigorous cannonade of seventeen bells rung at once; and which, having once begun, now continued to rebound, like reverberating thunder, without mercy, and without intermission. The most tremendous, it was observed, always came from the Aloof apartments.

Miss M'Tavish's forlorn hope still lay with Betty Wade; and having opened a passage to herself through this scene of hurry and confusion where she could, she found herself in one of the vast galleries, or upper landing-places, of which, in the morning, when all were quiet in sleep, she had taken so hasty, and, as it would appear, so unprofitable a leave. The din, here, was therefore a little more gentle and aristocratic; and Miss M'Tavish could look about her without the certainty of being stunned.

Every chamber was now open, empty, and unoccupied; or rather, possessed and abandoned with such capricious activity, as to deserve, without maintaining, the merit of either. Ladies were sending away, and then calling back their attendants; and, in half-clad travelling habiliments, were either lost in vacant listlessness, or roused to sudden and vigorous exertion. The gentlemen, too, were either whistling, calculating upon time, or promenading it about in clanking boots; their gentlemanly hands for once burdened and encumbered with musty books, walking-canes, and large-sized oldish

umbrellas. Mr Augustus Maringle, in particular, carried beneath his left arm the remains of a cannister of Hardie's No. 34. and John Bull; and the Honourable Charles James Aloof, a newspaper filled with unparalleled cigars. These goods, like their owners, had not yet, it appears, been properly bestowed, and had already been more than once recaptured from under the heavy folds of a rough woolled coat, or the more silken ones of a young lady's parasol, to the manifest danger of spoliation by theft, or the equally disagreeable one of being forgot. Even Colonel Brown's system of civil tactics seemed to have been discarded and abandoned in the general confusion of flight; and that same terrible gentleman himself even assisted in bringing forth from his daughter's about-to-be abdicated apartment, the much wished-for and obliging Betty Wade, who appeared at length, laden with a travelling manteau and bonnet of her mistress's.

" Betty—Wade !" cried Miss M'Tavish, now gasping hard for breath.

" Miss—Mac—Tav—ish !!!" and the cloak and bonnet dropt softly to the ground.

“ Betty, did you ever lose yourself?”

“ No,” said Betty, beginning to tremble, she did not know for what. “ But when was you lost?”

“ Here—here, in this very place. And if you’ll take a look of me, you’ll see that I think myself still lost yet.”

“ Ah ! poor thing ! poor thing ! many a severe trial, I dare say, it’s had : but you see——confound that infernal bell ! that I should say so—she must just wait till her time comes.”

“ O, yes ; let her wait till her time comes. Oh ! oh ! oh ! oh ! oh !”

“ Now there again, though ; what think ye of that ? But come you in here out of the way of the folk ; for, as Mr Maringle says, all and every one of them seem more or less *bit*.—Here, here, take that.”

“ What ! that full bumper of pure brandy ?”

“ Every drop, as you exist.”

“ Now, now, I think that’s enough.”

“ No, no ; every inch.—Poor body ! it has but too much need of all the good things it can get.”

“ Betsy—you’ve surely been tasting rather freely yoursel’.”

“ Oh, no ; only Mr Bottlecork the head butler’s lunch. We all got cards for it three days since. But wait a moment till I come back ; that bell will certainly ring me to my grave.”

“ What an odd creature that Betty Wade is !” murmured Miss M‘Tavish.

“ Poor Miss M‘Tavish, poor thing ; what a fool I must have been not to find out that she was a wee silly before this, poor body ! And to lose herself before she could win the length of the gates. Possibly slept all day in Lady Aloof’s coach, and might have served for a mat-rug all the way to Edinburgh !” murmured, in return, Betty Wade.——

“ Have you seen Mr Maringle, Maria ?” Mrs Maringle had changed Betty into Maria.

“ Yes, Ma’am ; he’s gone into Lady Lumberfield’s room.”

“ To get the promise of the legacy, I suppose,” said Mrs Maringle to herself. “ But, Maria, I will trouble you to take out all these papers. I must have my head dressed every day

to please him; for, I don't know how it is, I think his temper a little petted sometimes."

"Yes, Ma'am, I'll be back directly; there's a person waiting to speak with me on the stairs."

"Maria," quickly commanded Mrs Maringle, "there's no such thing. Here, take the left side first."

"But just *one moment*, Ma'am——if you'll allow me?" added Betty Wade.

"No, Maria, I can't allow you. You have all these hair-pins to put past; and I expect the carriages up immediately."

"But Lady Aloof will feel so disappointed about these gofferings I offered to pack up in the ribbon-box, Ma'am."

"Lady Aloof, is it? why, then, when you have dressed that second curl, you must attend her, I suppose."

"It was only her maid, Ma'am. She asked me at Mr Bottlecork's lunch."

"Her maid only! O, then, pray stay where you are. But will you be very long in helping her with these things, Maria?"

“ O, not a moment ; not a second.”

“ Then go now, if you please.”

“ Yes, Ma’am.—O, Miss M‘Tavish ! Miss M‘Tavish ! what a wretch of a woman that Mrs Maringle is ! yatter, yatter, yatter. And her husband ! I do verily believe he is beginning to detest her. But what’s next to be done with *you*, my woman ?”

“ I don’t know, Betty. But I think it will neither be your Fife-halls, nor your Lumberfield Castles, that will ever wile me out o’ good Kirkaldy again. A set of incarnates !”

“ It’s such a lang toun !” sighed Betty, who, though she heard very well, sometimes listened rather imperfectly.

“ Lang toun ! I think it’s a heaven upon earth compared with this hole. But I should like a glass of water, if I could get one.”

“ A glass of water ! Take you another thimble-full of that brandy.”

“ Well, as you are all so very busy, I think I will just take your advice : But, stop ! the half of that.”

“ O dear, there’s nothing there ; and Mr

Bottlecork doesn't want that any of it should be seen left—you understand?"

"Ah, well.—And now, Betty Wade, my woman, you must get me one of Lady Lumberfield's men for a guide to me, as far as the North Ferry post-road."

"My dear, every *soul's* engaged," said the emphatic Betty Wade.

"Then I must stop here, and perish."

"Stay, stay, stay; I'll contrive. O yes, I have it. I know an active long-legged lad, who will just answer your purpose. Wait there, and I'll fetch him."

"Ay do, Betty, do."

(Re-enter Betty Wade and long-legged lad).

"Here he is, Miss M'Tavish."

"Well, he must take me to the nearest village on this side of the great Edinburgh road; and he must set out directly."

"But then all the company will be going away," wisely observed the long-legged lad.

"I see what he's after. He wants to be where the corn grows. But never mind, I'll make up the difference. A bird in the hand,

ye ken, and half-a-crown, are no just to be despised in these hard times. You've consented, I see; and wise, my man, are ye.—Farewell, Betty, farewell.—And Betty, for mercy's sake! never believe yourself safe in this dungeon till you're out o't; for, as my father used to say, Wha would be a Fife laird?"

Miss M'Tavish, followed by her conducteur, hastened down stairs; fought her way as well as she could; did not observe or distinguish a salute of faint muttered yells from a band who knew that she could not belong to the house; drove through a knot of party-coloured post-boys waiting for orders; and got fairly from the place. The heavy clanking patter of some lazy beast, or the more fiery dancing of better blood, with the accompanying admonitions of their respective grooms while in the act of "putting to," was not at this moment required to oblige her to hasten her speed; and, in despite of the heat, her recent distress and present fatigue, she had gained in half an hour the fatal village; had put two half-crowns instead of one into the hands of the long-legged lad—who

went off like a shot ; and had seated herself in the Kirkaldy carriage, now happily ready to start.

“ Speak to me,” she said, as the post-boy made haste to enclose her by shutting up the steps.

“ Weel, Mem ?”

But Miss M'Tavish was speechless.—The Lumberfield faction had at last got the better of all the ceremonious details connected with their own august importance, and were now driving things to extremities. Miss M'Tavish saw, first through the windows of her chariot, and next through a gap in the forest, the now dissolved Lumberfield Junta dash past in incredible numbers, like the fast-flitting figures in a magic lantern ; while the woods and plains around seemed shaken as with the trembling roll of approaching artillery.

“ It's a' nonsense !” she at last essayed, heaving a profound sigh : “ It's a' nonsense ! What could this yae machine, and thae puir pair o' brutes do in a race with that gallopping crowd ?”

“Are they coming?” said the lad—who had heard of the Lumberfield gathering—and jumping up upon one of his horse’s backs.

“Coming! Ay, coming to my cost.”

“Aweel, I’m no frightened for them.”

“I dare say ye’re no frightened for them, my man. But can ye beat them the race?”

“Why, it’s no owre five mile to the post; and I’ve seen, I think, thir bit beasties do as much before,” returned the lad.

“Get on then, and no stand clavering there.”

Clash went the door—clatter went the glass.

“It’s no broke !!!” screamed Miss M’Tavish.

“Wha cares?” cried the boy—

And away went Miss M’Tavish, her charioteer and steeds.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Then followeth my Lord on his mule
Tapped with gold ;
Then hath he servants five or six score,
Some behind and some before.”

SKELTON.

THE high dignity, however, of the individuals who had met in congress at Lumberfield Castle, requires that we should not remain content with Miss M'Tavish's helter-skelter account of them, nor suffer so many nobles to depart the realm of Fife without conferring upon them a more particular mark of our care and consideration.

On Thursday, then, the 13th of September, (supposed 1827), the grand functionaries diplomatique set out on their return to their

respective dominions. First of all, at the distance of three hundred yards in advance, was the large family coach, with its double-plate glass and enormous huge lamps, of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Aloof and suite; containing the noble Lord's own illustrious wife and daughter within; a valet, maid, unhorsed out-rider, footman, and groom, with two led horses, without.

The next caravan in rank, and at the extreme head of the centre division, *ecce* the tippy-built concern of the Honourable Charles James Ferdinand Frederick Aloof. His own man, with a face starched up in corresponding pomposity, was permitted a place by his side.

More amongst the main body, and not exactly close upon the cabriolet of the Honourable Charles James Ferdinand Frederick Aloof, followed Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle, in their own carriage,—the same which had, in town, drawn up so apropos before the door of Mrs Fife, that memorable day which had produced the spectacle of Mr M'Farlane's limbless pantaloons. In front was the amiable Betty Wade,

and Mr Maringle's own page ; and, for the sake of honour, four post-horses like the rest. Colonel Brown, in his old coach, with dressed plough-horses to go two stages, followed as they could. Next came Sir Henry and Lady Maringle's little light barouche ; their elder son, with his Honourable Lady, in his landaulet ; and last of all, in a carriage hired from the coach-makers, the Messrs Regular and their green bag. A third brigade should have followed, consisting of the well-kept equipages of the Horn Regulars and Methodicals ; but these, as they had not very far to proceed in company with the grand division, had taken their departure on the preceding night.

The cavalcade, consisting of between forty and fifty souls, and four-and-twenty horse, had left the first posting-house, still pursuing Miss M'Tavish, whose charioteer had had, however, the dexterity to defy them to approach ; when, on their arrival at ———, they found Lord Aloof's richly laden coach stranded for want of hands ; Lady Aloof nearly in fits, and calling for salts ; and the Honourable Charles James,

who had contrived to give the main body the slip, boxed up like a mummy—less, this time, in pride than amazement.

To condescend upon particulars :—Miss Mac-Tavish, that bird of evil omen, had, after distributing liberally in favour of her charioteer both in praise and in purse, taken up a chaise-and-four to carry her on to the North-Ferry coast, with power to retain the said concern at pleasure. A gentleman, who had arrived also in haste by a cross-road, had done the same ; and Miss M'Tavish had despatched other four, with similar restrictions, to meet Mrs Fife.

But matters had not yet come to the worst. Lord Fiddle-faddle, with two carriages-and-four, and up to the arm-pits in minerals, wild plant roots, and moss, had bespoke six of the to-be-retained horses of the grand army for each ; an arrangement which was to hobble, in their capacity of advanced guards, both Mr and Mrs A. Maringle and the Aloofs ; while Colonel Brown, who had determined to ask no more work out of his already over-driven beasts, and

Lady Lumberfield's pair, already on their return, completed the stoppage in rear as in front.

When the general consternation had a little subsided, the *gentlemen* of the troops came to the singular conclusion, "that something must be done;" and a resolution was accordingly, *nemine contradicente*, adopted, that they should attempt forthwith to open a communication with the coast by the more circuitous routes of Burntisland, Kinghorn, and Pettycur.

Difficulties, however, more desperate than those occasioned by the last terrible snow-storm, were also in this quarter to be surmounted. Mrs Fife of Fife-hall, Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, and one of the five Lords, had already taken up all the horses on that line of road.

To make a virtue of necessity seemed to be the next best plan; and the flying Junta were requested to abandon their carriages till an express had been sent forward as far as ———, with a commission, signed by the chiefs, to carry off every horse in the place.

The distance was far, and the messenger was

several hours upon the road. At length and at last he returned; but only to announce, "that Mrs Fife of Fife-hall, Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, and one of the five Lords, had just passed through; and that their horses had been all sent back, with the exception of the four in the hands of Mrs Fife, which had been commanded to remain, to assist her, in case of need, upon her retreat."

This last intimation, as might have been suspected, was received with any thing but applause, and actual fear began to occupy the place of false terrors, and other frivolous sorts of affectations.

Colonel Brown drew Lord and Lady Aloof and their daughter aside. "Fatal circumstances," he began, "combined with many unforeseen and extraordinary events, have occurred to disorganize and impede our progress. Nothing less, then, than the utmost exertions of fortitude, patience, and resignation, can enable us to combat with so terrible a necessity; or endue us with energy sufficient to ameliorate the

misfortunes of a situation so terrible and unexpected !”

“ My dear, dear Colonel, you quite frighten Lady Aloof. I see no accident that can have as yet occurred to us so very terrible as to occasion all the misery you speak of; unless it be the possibility of Lady Aloof’s being obliged to remain on this road all night.”

“ Alas ! alas ! alas !” and Colonel Brown, with a grin of despair, clasped both Lord Aloof’s hands in his.

“ What, here ! colonel Brown ?” cried Lady Aloof with a nervous laugh.

“ What, here ?” scarcely articulated her daughter.

“ *Here !*” echoed Lord Aloof.

“ Alas ! would to Heaven that I had any power to preserve you from the calamity of so shocking an event ;” and Colonel Brown, in true soldier-like sympathy, took out his handkerchief.

Lord and Lady Aloof sat down upon a pair of rather religious looking cane-bottomed chairs. Such a misfortune had never happened them

before—we mean in their own country. They had confidently relied upon the indefatigable exertions of their friends, at least to secure *their* progress; and their mortification was therefore the more unexpected, and, in consequence, the more unbearable.

The situation of the suite was proportionally bad. Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle, deprived of all their ordinary means of amusement, and even denied the satisfaction of getting themselves fatigued, were now in a predicament than which nothing could possibly be more horrible or more hopeless. Sir Henry and Lady Maringle enacted Patience on a monument *without* the smiles. Those pains-taking worthies, the Messrs Regular, themselves, became impatient and uneasy. The rest, with the Honourable Mr Aloof at their head, were sick.

Fear, misery, anxiety, despair—short uncertain walks—abrupt sentences—frequent consultations—earnest ejaculations—disappointed looks—and servants, waiters, postillions, and chambermaids, delighted beyond all measure—constituted the principal features of this adventure in its

present condition; and at twelve o'clock at night the party abandoned themselves to their fate.

Lord and Lady Aloof, indeed, had suggested a plan for bringing horses from the fields, or taking them from the plough. But from this desperate measure they had been at length persuaded, by a fear lest the animals, when tired, would lay them all fast in some adjoining ditch.

While all these terrible affairs were transacting, Miss M'Tavish, rather the better for her day's exploits, and still fast in the belief that the whole Lumberfield concern was at her heels, had made her hasty entrée into the worthy burgh of North-Queensferry.

Mrs Fife had not, however, arrived; not being, very probably, aware of her agent's powers of locomotion when compelled to go at speed: and Miss M'Tavish was beginning, with that discontent which so often accompanies the successful, to deplore her fortune, when a loud clatter on the pavé announced the vicinity of her awful pursuers.

Her awful pursuers turned out to be Miss

Hyndford of Hyndshaw, on her way to cross the Forth ; followed by the Earl of ———, on the same errand ; and, though last not least, by Mrs Fife.

Mrs Fife almost flew up stairs, and was on the point of entering a very good-sized parlour, which had once been recommended to her use before, when she was informed that it contained the preparations already made for the early dinner, or rather *dejeuné à la fourchette*, ordered by Colonel Brown of Bertie, for himself and a large party expected every second moment from Lumberfield Castle.

Mrs Fife, however, was soon otherwise accommodated ; and, though pretty much shattered by fatigue, was soon able to begin her catechism upon Miss M'Tavish.

“ Poor Betty Wade was in such requisition—six ladies to dress at night, and five to attend to again in the morning—the suspicious looks of the servants, and the surveillance of Colonel Brown—a promise of discovery in the morning—the ushered-in preparations for departure—her own adventures, and her desperate effort

to keep the lead of the conspirators;" such were the heads and tails of Miss M'Tavish's apology.

"My dear Miss M'Tavish, no regrets; you sent me the horses, and I am in time. We will get Betty Wade to ourselves after all; and I shall behold, with my own eyes, the last manœuvres of the set. But I cannot wait here for them," she continued, "let us clamber up some of these hills, and spy them out as they approach. How many are there of them, think ye?"

"A hundred, I suppose."

"A hundred! But come, come, come—— Stay, let us have something to eat. Do you recollect that night when we went to see the Logans? In the mean time, pray, have you rung the bell?"

Miss M'Tavish *had* rung the bell.

"Well, waiter, what's in the house?"

"There's hare soup—mock turtle soup—brown soup—mulli"——

"O, yes, yes, yes; you've always plenty. Bring us up some fish and meat, and a little

white wine. And pray place the table at the window : I love to see what's going on."

The waiter quickly reappeared, fetching the viands desired ; and which, by the way, Mrs Fife and her friend almost as quickly despatched.

" Put on your bonnet, Miss M'Tavish." And the two, as had been proposed, now took to the hills.

Neither the beauties of sunset upon scenery at all times picturesque, nor the calm and tranquil softness of the summer twilight, were enough to subdue or to tame the obdurate hearts of this pair of political adventuresses. Mrs Fife had informed herself of the details which fell to Miss M'Tavish regarding the approaching journey of the Junto ; had almost supposed she heard the rumbling of so many carriage-wheels herself ; and with an imagination doubly excited by the circumstance of their non-arrival, awaited, in fractious anxiety, the tedious moment of their near approach.

The two ladies walked ; the two ladies talked ; the two ladies rested themselves ; the two ladies wearied themselves. At half-past seven at

night, not the most distant sounds gave intimation of the arrival of the Lumberfield faction ; nor did any other travellers appear to be approaching from that quarter of the road.

“ They must have gone straight across the country, and taken their passage for Newhaven.”

“ No ;” Miss M‘Tavish had seen their whole force come thundering along within a mile of ———.

“ Some accident must have occurred. Yet why stop the rest ? Pleased with their entertainment in Fife, they were still willing to have it continued. They must be dining with some laird or other on the road. No ; their dinner was awaiting them.—They had miscalculated a day, and were not to arrive at the North-Ferry before the following afternoon. No ; they were all in haste. The Messrs Regular had sworn to be in Edinburgh within a certain given time ; and beds for Lord Aloof and suite had actually been secured at ——’s hotel, for that very night.”

It grew late ; it grew dark. They had read somewhere in their rambles a proclamation for

the apprehension of vagrants and strolling vagabonds ; and from a fear lest their own pious peregrinations might subject them to some such penalty, they now bethought themselves of their head-quarters.

“ My dear Miss M'Tavish, get me a book ;” for Mrs Fife was very little inclined to remain idle. “ A novel, rather than any thing else.”

Miss M'Tavish made a perambulation through the place ; and from the lot chose, for her own taste, “ Love at First Sight,”—“ Delicate Sensibility ” for Mrs Fife,—and “ The Captain in Love,” as a *corps de reserve* for the benefit of both.

Mrs Fife opened one of the volumes at random, and read the following sentence, “ The delicate hand of Matilda overturned her tea-cup,” under which was pencilled, in a raw sprawling hand, “ *The tremendous hand of Matilda overturned all the tea-cups.*”

“ The tremendous hand of Matilda ! well, how odd !—Well, Miss M'Tavish, it is not the first time my curiosity has caused me to send to a circulating library for a book, merely for the

purpose of reading all the remarks upon it. But this one serves even a higher purpose, by reminding us of the comforts of a cup of tea. Are there ever any earthquakes, I wonder, in Fife ?”

“ My dear Madam, why do you ask ?”

“ Because I have no longer any doubt but that the Lumberfield fry have been swallowed up, like Pharaoh’s host in the Red Sea, for their crimes. But, pray, let’s have our cup of tea. And now, I suppose, we may as well tell them that we shall remain here all night. Have you any objections, Miss M’Tavish ?”

“ None in the world. I think we are very comfortably disposed.”

Over their tea the parties grew hoarse in maintaining an argument of conjectures ; and at last retired to bed, to dream of the Lumberfield Junto flourishing along, much, we imagine, in the manner of Cerinus his shews in the amphitheatre of Titus.

At six o’clock in the morning Mrs Fife descended from her cranny, to make personal

inquiry of all whom she could suppose or guess to be concerned.

In answer—Nobody, save herself and Miss M'Tavish, had arrived.

“ Were there no *other* lodgings about the place ? ”

“ There were. But the carriages, had there been any, must have come to our inn-yard.”

Mrs Fife proceeded to inspect the said yard, and saw a man with a mop in his hand scrubbing up the last returned post-chaise. No other equipage it seemed than her own had remained since the preceding night ; and Mrs Fife began at length to feel convinced, that the Lumberfield Junto had, through Colonel Brown's management, finally escaped her. The ruse of the *dejeuné* had succeeded but too well ; and she no longer hesitated about giving orders for her departure. Miss M'Tavish she advised to cross over to the other side, and decently take her place in the first stage-coach.

The way to her own Fife-hall, however, was long, and might prove dreary, especially after so signal a defeat ; and Mrs Fife consented to

wait till breakfast could be served up. She had begun to experience something of the effects of the last day's agitation ; and felt, perhaps, that she had need of all the ordinary comforts of life.

“ Though the idea is nonsense, Miss M'Tavish, I should not have regretted if that Lumberfield band had been extinguished by lightning, or some other means, on the road ; for, to tell you the truth, I have not passed one quiet night since the very first day these people entered Fife. — Edge the breakfast-table a little nearer the window ; it's all my consolation to see every body as they pass.”

“ Is your tea good, Mrs Fife ? ” demanded Miss M'Tavish.

Mrs Fife, in imitation of the tremendous Matilda, dropped both her tea and her tea-cup.

One of Lord Aloof's grooms, with the two led horses smoking with foam, and covered with dust, were heard scampering upon the street.

All the horses of the surrounding country had been called up, during the night, to help Lady Lumberfield's intercepted guests ; and this *avant-*

courier had been sent on for the express purpose of hastening the departure of the earliest boat, or of securing one upon any terms in its place. All which agreeable intelligence was now, as we have told, announced to Mrs Fife, who had contrived to throw open the window, at the same time that she had thrown down her tea-cup.

“ They are coming at the gallop, Miss M‘Tavish—He says they are coming at the gallop! —O gracious! how my poor little heart beats! Here, give me your arm, Miss M‘Tavish: I must have something for support; and you are always very obli—— Oh! oh! my gracious! what’s that?”

“ It’s thunder!” cried Miss M‘Tavish, “ or cannon from Inch Garvie fort.”

“ No, it’s a troop of dragoons—it’s that young man the Duke of B——;—it’s—Oh, have mercy on us! it’s—the Lumberfield Junto!!!

“ My *dear* Mrs Fife!” said Miss M‘Tavish in some alarm.

“ O, nonsense, nonsense, Miss M‘Tavish; I’m well enough. But do you see that? and that?”

and that?—Quick, quick, close in the shutters, and let us peep between. I am so terrified for that man Brown, after dunning him so when he last came to Fife-hall.”

And assuredly they beheld from their hiding-place the whole party—mad with hurry and impatience, eager to arrive and determined to be gone—come plunge, in all the extravagance of haste, *pêle-mêle* through the place. Sir Henry Maringle’s light barouche first; the Messrs Regular next; Colonel Brown’s carriage, and that of his son-in-law abreast; the rest cutting out each other at all points; and Lord Viscount Aloof’s heavy coach amongst the last.

The uproar continued. The pole of Lord Aloof’s heavy coach, which was now what is called “bringing up,” ran straight through the back of Sir Henry Maringle’s light barouche. Horses were thrown down; carriages were dashed against each other, and locked; and the Honourable Charles James Ferdinand Frederick Aloof’s cabriolet was capsized. The two figures belonging to the inside had been previously got out. The outcries now became dreadful; and

Mrs Fife held both hands tight upon her mouth, in order to stifle the screams of mingled curiosity, terror, and delight, which rushed thither in search of utterance or escape.

In the meanwhile, luggage continued to be dashed about; ladies were stowed away; and servants and masters, scolding, swearing, and obeying, were hurried down to the vessel prepared to take them all across. The Messrs Regular, despite the decorum of their calling, had sprung on board first; a crowd of people seemed to be attending Lady Maringle, and another crowd Lady Aloof. Colonel Brown had gallantly undertaken to escort the ladies' maids; and Betty Wade herself, the star of hope, was seen to set in sails now, and, it might be, for ever.

Mrs Fife gave one cry, and fell back into her seat.

"There goes *a few!*" said somebody from the pavé below.

"And there's an end of somebody's curiosity," cried Colonel Brown, now approaching the speechless Mrs Fife.

Mrs Fife now screamed in earnest. Miss M'Tavish fled. The people of the house approached in consternation and affright.

“Are they really gone, Colonel Brown? Really gone?”

“You see she is pacified,” said Colonel Brown, and the crowd dispersed. “My dear Mrs Fife, I would advise you to return in quiet to your own home, for I have a suspicion that the much coveted children of intelligence are now, by this time, safe in the middle of the sea.”

So rapid the motion, the whirl and the boil ;
So loud was the tumult, so fierce the turmoil—
It sunk away with a murmuring moan ;
The sea is calm, and the sinners are gone.

CHAPTER X.

Hæc tibi erunt artes——

Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos——

VIRGIL.

As if in reproach to the infuriated crew who had thrown themselves thus wildly into much astonished North Queensferry, Mr Monotony—the side-blinds of his carriage drawn carefully down, and his quiet self joggled forward at his usual easy chair rate of four miles an hour—now entered the South. It was not in any of that gentleman's plans of campaign, to extend those sleepy drives which, in summer, he daily took in the vicinity of Edinburgh, in the direction of those receptacles of bustle and resort, Queensferry, Rosslyn, Lasswade, or the like; nevertheless, it was not so entirely out of the

line of his interests to make his own of a *cas fortuit*, should any misadventure happen as it were to his servants, horses, carriage-tackling, or himself; and in want, then, of some little “odds and ends” of belt and leather-strap, did Mr Monotony make his quiet entrée into the one town, just about the same period of time that the Lumberfield party entered the other.

As the morning was very clear—(for Mr Monotony had, in imitation of one of those fortuitous, but extraordinary coincidences, which so often help to resolve the fate of empires as well as of individuals,* set out that same morning a full hour earlier than usual)—the inhabitants of the south coast, and Mr Monotony amongst the rest, could perceive, even without the help of telescopes, that some movement extraordinary was at that moment taking place upon the opposite shore. In fact, every one had seen, like the visions of the second sight, a long train descend, ‘like a shadow on the hill,’ from the height look-

* See Napoleon Bonaparte’s account of his appointment to the post of Commander-in-chief.

ing over the sea upon the Kinross road ; while, at the same time, the scarce less rapid display of signals gave intimation, that the spectators were soon to be gratified with a much nearer inspection of the shew.

Mr Monotony at least admitted the variety of optical diversions ; and, as we have been told, had, while sauntering pensive on the beach, espied the clatter-clash that was now taking place upon the other side ; but the unfortunate conviction that they were by this time more than half-way across, caused him to reflect upon the danger of being himself circumvented by the rout.

In this dilemma, (for every body knows the time that a carriage takes to receive even the slightest of all possible repairs), Mr Monotony bethought himself of a scheme which he had once or twice—possibly upon similar occasions—practised before ; and which, we are satisfied, he could only have learned from Mrs Fife. He got quietly into the carriage itself ; tipped his man the wink, who hung out the dead lights, and awaited through the small little back-glass

the appearance, but more particularly the disappearance, of the expected multitude: Or rather, like a watchful ferret, cotemporary with his instructress, Mrs Fife, very nicely scrutinized and investigated the unsuspecting rabble, who, in all the mad and eager bustle of persons detained against their inclinations and their interests, were now taking the start of one another.

Poor neglected Mr Monotony! The Earl of ———, one of the five Lords, and Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, had just left; and still more of the Fife gentry seemed to be flying from their country. The kingdom of Fife has long been robbed of its monarchy; and what was to become of that *ci-devant* nation, should it next be deprived of its aristocracy? Still the aristocracy seemed to fly, as if in fear for their lives; and the people ran to behold, wonder, and assist the last landed host, leaving the strap which steadied Mr Monotony's hind dicky, as it was before—unfixed. Nay, Mr Monotony and his whole concern was looked upon as lumber tumbled in upon them at this awful moment, as a sort of visitation or plague; and, though there

appeared no want of attention on the part of the authorities themselves, the preference, on that of the working classes, was decidedly given in favour of the Junto just arrived.

Nor was so kind a preference bestowed *entirely* from motives of vanity or pride. The Lumberfield Junto needed the assistance of the whole working population, so great had been the damage of their flight; while their demands were rendered so much the more importunate from the circumstance, that they could not possibly be prevailed upon to abide the time that their repairs required;—for even the half-smashed barouche of Lady Maringle went off with all its blushing honours on its back; nor would either the Messrs Regular or my Lord Aloof stay behind, though threatened with the very probable termination of their lives;—the former, on account of the shattered condition of their wheels; and the latter, from a split given to the pole of the grand heavy coach in its feud with Lady Maringle's barouche, and which was therefore confidently expected to snap, on coming to any thing like a descent.

These dangers, mixed up with a proportionate quantity of small silver from the owners of the respective caravanseras, greatly augmented, however, the popularity of the parties in question, as well as the crowd that accompanied them; and Mr Monotony, even had he been willing, could not have got off before the whole squadron, and their attendants, had once more taken the road.

But whether was poor, indifferent, neglected Mr Monotony, laughing at last in his coach, as well as in his sleeve, at the caricature faces of hurry and importance which he had witnessed, from the right honourable Lord Viscount Aloof, to the little bare-footed sailor boy who had followed with her Ladyship's pocket-handkerchief—and which her squeamish maid had not observed to alight within a foot and half of the water's edge; or the Lumberfield faction itself, to be in future most pitied or approved?

“ We *feel* the inconveniencies of our own immediate condition—we neither *feel* nor *see* those that exist in any other.”

The dispersed Lumberfield Junto thought on their arrival at Edinburgh, (like that of the French army in their Russian campaign at Smolensk), that all their troubles and disasters were at an end. But, like the misfortunes of most persons, who have hitherto got but too little to vex them, theirs were only beginning.

Sir Henry and Lady Maringle had been put to vast expense—the barouche none of the least—merely, as it would seem, to get themselves jockeyed, or, as some would say, humbugged. Their elder son and his honourable spouse had hardly arrived in better plight. The Aloofs had now leisure to reflect on the misfortune of being compelled to admit, not only the *possibility*, but the *probability*, of having Mr Augustus Maringle and his wife domiciled at Castle Aloof; and the still farther misfortune of having to chaperonade them through the different Courts of Rome, London, Paris, Naples, and elsewhere.

But most to be pitied were now the former objects of fear, envy, and consideration—Mr Augustus Maringle himself, and his wife.

The gentleman, like most persons in whom cunning and distrust more than supplies, sometimes, the place of calmer judgment and reflection, now openly indulged in the too-well confirmed suspicion—for he, too, had had his spies upon his wife—that his lady had been accessory to the disappointment of his own and his family's prospects ; while the *now* evidently constrained civilities of the Aloofs gave intimation, how little pleasure was to be derived from the discovery.

Neither did the lady, on the other hand, require so many hints of his dissatisfaction to urge her on to act *her* part in the quarrel. She had outlived the period when newly-married persons unite together harmoniously, in the indulgence which they so often give to their vanities in the first order and arrangement of their dress, house, equipage, &c. ; and in which the great charm principally consists in outvying, and, by consequence, tormenting every body else. Mrs Augustus Maringle could not forget, too, the pleasure with which, according to the testimony of an ear-witness, her husband looked

forward to her own possible extinction; and it was now her pleasure to rejoice, that she had disabled him from ever expecting to be benefited in the manner intended:——

But if we would transport ourselves to that counterpart of the happy valley of Rasselas, where tumult and intrigue always represented distance; where peace, as in Mr Monotony's case, did not degenerate into apathy, nor tranquillity into indifference; where the desire of doing good was never stifled by the suggestions of interest; and where the benefits of life were not merely to be seen, but partaken; we must return once more to the field of flowers—return once more to Champ Fleury.

Seated in an embrasure of a window, busily engaged in that most genteel of all productions, “Almacks,” which, by some mischance or other she had not been permitted to read before, was the Lady Montgomery, when her expected guest, Theophilus Madrake, Esq. was shewn into the room.

“You ought not to have written any letter, Mr Madrake,” said Lady Montgomery, after

the usual felicitations on both sides had been expressed; "for I look upon you as one of those extraordinarily well informed people, who are always sufficiently *au fait* as to whatever can be said, written, or expressed; and from whom there is never any thing to be disguised or concealed. It was enough, methinks, for you to know that you were welcome."

Mr Madrake bowed.

"But we must get you Lady Juliana," continued Lady Montgomery. "I have nobody with me but Miss Hyndford; and as you seem prepared to walk abroad after your drive, you will be the better of a guide: only I don't know where we may find Juliana, she has got so many people to attend to about this time."

"It will be, then, such a pleasure for me to seek her out," Madrake replied; "and should I prove unsuccessful, I shall, at least, have the unqualified happiness of enjoying every thing I may see by myself."

Lady Montgomery smiled. "You say so in joke, Mr Madrake; but very possibly you say

nothing but the truth. You will stay, however, till you have seen Miss Hyndford."

"I *have* seen Miss Hyndford."

"Pray, once more then, Mr Madrake."

Mr Madrake pointed to the surrounding country, shining in all the grand and inexpressible magnificence of bright and glorious sunshine.

"N'importe, Mr Madrake, you must stay within: I hear Miss Hyndford already upon the stairs."

Madrake seated himself, and the celebrated Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, as was expected, made her debut.

Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw was forty; her dress was intended to represent her at thirty. She was neither stout, tall, lean, little, nor fat; —Miss Hyndford's person was a well proportioned and unobtrusive mixture of them all. Her face, also, had something of the same unoffending indifference in it, and, though graced with dark eyes and dark hair, had still that swarth colour and ill formed shape which condemned it to be forever plain, and forever black.

Her manners, however, were extremely well formed, plain, genteel, and regular; but being very much spoiled, and always taught to believe that she might play a prominent part, her temper continually soured upon trifles; while an importunate desire to excite attention, was also clogged with a fear that she was constantly committing herself by exciting too much. This unsettled conduct, therefore, rendered her, though originally by no means an unamiable character, to appearance very capricious, and very proud. Her great ambition, meanwhile, consisted in never remaining very long in any one place; and in being invited to play and sing, though her voice was now hard and broken, and the former talent not in her disposition. She had her own share, nevertheless, of female sagacity and female cunning; and with respect to the good qualities and accomplishments of others, her judgment, upon most occasions, was tolerably correct.

Miss Hyndford, such as we have described her, was very happy to have the pleasure of meeting Mr Madrake again, &c. &c.; all which

was replied to in course by the gentleman so addressed. The gentleman was not, however, to be honoured with very many more of the lady's kind considerations, for Miss Hyndford, having seated herself, began to complain in rather discontented terms of the heat. "It was disagreeable," as she said, "to *her*; and there was nothing so very vexatious as too much sun." She had been prevented from walking out from that circumstance, be it remembered, for the last five days. Her complaints, nevertheless, at this precise moment, were not altogether occasioned by this uncomfortable reminiscence of past annoyances, (for she had just found it necessary to throw over her black neck a white lace handkerchief), but conjured up in order to shew Mr Madrake, to whom she believed she had now too much condescended, that though she had the benefit of his company, she could still feel herself very uneasy in his presence.

Mr Madrake professed to think the weather charming, and the day delightful; and, as a proof, would not, upon any account, remain one minute longer in the house.

He was overtaken on the stairs by a message from Lady Montgomery, which went to say, "that as Miss Hyndford fancied she should be the better of a little exercise in the open air, she would, if he had no particular objections, do herself the pleasure of accompanying him in his walk." That lady had just been seized with an opposite fear, that she should, at least for him, pass the remainder of the morning in neglect; and had therefore, as we have seen, called forth all her powers of condescension to her aid. And these were barely sufficient. Mr Madrake was still inclined to excuse himself; but, on the consideration that Lady Montgomery must necessarily come in for some share of Miss Hyndford's punishment, he sent back the messenger to announce, "that he awaited Miss Hyndford's pleasure."

Miss Hyndford, too, in the mean time, had her scruples.

"Lady Montgomery, ought I to go?"

"Give Miss Hyndford her bonnet, Marianne."

"Well, then, I mustn't keep Mr Madrake

waiting, I suppose. But, really, I think I had better have staid where I was."

"And perhaps Mr Madrake, since he seems to be in a hurry at any rate, may like it quite as well."

"Not so tight, Marianne; not so tight, child. I cannot endure to have my face blocked up between two side-boards.—Mr Madrake now *expects* me, Lady Montgomery," she added more seriously, "else certainly I should never have troubled myself with walking out in this shocking hot day.—Where's my parasol, do you know, Marianne?"

Marianne had provided herself with her mistress Lady Juliana's garden fan.

"You stupid thing! do you think I could really make use of such a thing as *that* in walking out with a gentleman? But stay, you needn't fetch it; I dare not detain Mr Madrake any longer, and the white parasol is really shabby now. Pray, send somebody after us, Lady Montgomery; you know I shouldn't wish to stay abroad longer than five or ten minutes at a time.—Mr Madrake, perhaps you will

think me very foolish ; but do you know,—and I dare say you will think it very odd,—I never do take a gentleman's arm. Never take anybody's but Mr Aloof's, and then I have always to ask for it."

" And Captain Insistupont's, and Colonel Takebystorm's."

" Fifeshire, Mr Madrake ; all these are Fife-shire."

" Fifeshire ! Miss Hyndford ?"

" Why, did you never hear the story ?"

" No. But, pray, let's have it."

Miss Hyndford spread out Lady Juliana's immense garden fan to the utmost, and walked on in silence.

" Telling stories to *you*, Mr Madrake !" she faintly muttered,—“ Never.”

Mr Madrake, with infinite dexterity, was already poring over an ivory-case full of memoranda, and seemed to have uttered the last request by chance.

" You don't love stories, I perceive, Mr Madrake ?"

" Through what fair slit of that Brobdignag

fan can you perceive that, Miss Hyndford?" replied Madrake, without however taking his eyes for a moment off the pretended subject of his meditations, and talking at the same time in a calm voice of monotony.

"I am not watching you, Mr Madrake."

"And why not, pray?"

"People in *my* circumstances, Mr Madrake, are not accustomed"——

—"Accustomed! pray, to what are you accustomed? Have you got plenty of *money*, Miss Hyndford?"

Miss Hyndford made a motion as if she would return to the Chateau de Champ Fleury, indignant and insulted; but the idea of Lady Juliana, and the possible chit-chat Madrake and she might have together, and perhaps at her own expense, interfered to prevent her. It was necessary, however, to say or to do something; and pocketing this implied affront to her abstract consequence, she demanded with a half-laugh—

"Pray, Mr Madrake, don't you know that I am a young lady of fortune?"

“ I have only heard so,” returned the gentleman dryly.

“ Heard so ! why, I tell you it’s the case.”

“ And, pray, how much then may be in the case ?”

“ O no, Mr Madrake, that is for *you* to guess.”

“ Well, I shall try and come to the truth. Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw’s rental, vulgarly called ten, is just five thousand pounds a-year.”

“ Mr”——

—“ Pray, no interruptions, Ma’am. And out of this, by way of gentle preliminary, are reductions, one year with another, amounting in all to one-fifth part. Next come seat rents, parish dues, and annual contributions; two miles of fences to keep up; two old houses to maintain; and ten carts of danders, monthly, to keep in repair the coast-road: the whole this time—including accidents—coming up to, or rather taking down, one-third. Then the taxes, and the annual maintenance of some forty or fifty people, the precise employment of whom nobody can very rightly understand, but whose united exertions, backed by the taxes—

“ By prayers the hardest thing relaxes,
Nothing stands fix'd but death and taxes”—

—contrive at last to produce to Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw the mighty great sum of two hundred and fifty pounds per annum of commandable pocket-money, technically called disposable cash ; and all this in *lieu* of her poor helpless five thousand a-year. And were it not for a good round sum in some more beneficent quarter, Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, instead of travelling in a coach and four, might find some difficulty in merely procuring a sufficiency of food for the support of her own poor meagre existence,—so little virtue is there sometimes found in a hundred and odd guineas a-week.”

Like a certain celebrated female, when she asserted “ that the Waverley Novels must either be written by the devil or Walter Scott,” Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw could not, in her amazement, determine whether the speech she had just heard belonged to the devil or Mr Madrake. In imitation, however, of the former lady, she took the latter personage to be the truth ; but how *he* could have contrived to have acquainted himself with her secret resources,

astonished as much as it troubled and perplexed.

“ Now, Mr Madrake, confess, have you not been very rude ?”

“ I don’t know ; it is all in the way of my profession.”

“ Your profession ! Mr Madrake ?”

“ Yes, my profession. Don’t you know that I am just now employed in ascertaining the exact revenues of every person of rank and distinction in the kingdom ? To you only, Miss Hyndford, as a woman of sense and capacity, would I confide so much of my undertaking—which (between you and me) is intended to be a secret.”

“ Unless you only mention this in the way of compliment, Mr Madrake, I should really wish to know something of the condition of my neighbours. You deduct all mortgages, and other burdens, I suppose ?”

“ Nothing will give me greater pleasure, my dear Miss Hyndshaw ; but I do not think it altogether just, that the source of information should flow entirely upon one side. You have

the story, you know, which you wanted to tell me about Captain Insistupont, and some other of the Fifeshire residees.”

“ O, the story was nothing, my dear Mr Madrake—absolutely nothing. Not to interrupt *you*, however, you may have it.”

“ Madam, I am Patience on a monument.”

“ Well, then, I was one day going to sit down to dinner at —— Castle;—you know General —— is one of my trustees, a patient man, who waits always for the development of good qualities, which do not however exist,—when Lord Fiddle-faddle suddenly determined upon conducting me across the salon by the hand. I declined, Lord Fiddle-faddle persevered; I resisted, and Lord Fiddle-faddle insisted. The affair grew serious, and several dishes of goût were countermanded to the kitchen till the dispute should have terminated. The servants *en attendant* were also ordered out of the way, and the company gathered round to witness the dispute. Lord Fiddle-faddle had unfortunately taken it into his head, that if he did not gain the day, he should be for ever dishonoured and affronted;

and, as he prepared to use force, I declared, that I should sooner leave the Castle walls than submit. The applause which I obtained by this determination actually drove Lord Fiddle-faddle mad; and, as nobody ventured to restrain him, he rushed towards me with an air of the most violent and unexpected distraction. I was already prepared to give him his own way, and to give him my hand (as he wished) instead of my arm, when his extremely agitated and delirious appearance threw me into a fright; and I ran away, pursued by Lord Fiddle-faddle at a dance.

“ In the mean time, Mr Charles Suttie, who loves nothing so much as an adventure of this kind, had contrived to throw open all the doors; and into the open air, with Lord Fiddle-faddle still skipping at my heels, I rushed.

“ As might have been anticipated, the exertions of an old man, and of a young person like myself, were capable of great distinctions. I flew away like a bird; and Lord Fiddle-faddle staid on the lawn, only to receive another ridiculous shout of laughter and derision. He de-

clared, however, that he firmly believed I was lost; and as I continued to run on, there seemed to be some chance that he might find himself in the right. In a moment the whole company set off to assist Lord Fiddle-faddle in his pursuit; and Charles Suttie, who can adopt anybody's voice, had well nigh driven me back upon my old pursuer, by imitating his Lordship's tone, when, happening to catch a view of Captain Insistupont and Colonel Takebystorm, I suddenly sprung between them; and influenced, I believe, by a sort of insanity, the effect of my previous exertions, I exclaimed aloud with a bewildered air, 'O, dear, wild Fife!'

"This eccentric speech was heard by everybody; and partly to obtain peace, and partly to defy Lord Fiddle-faddle, I suffered both gentlemen to seize an arm, and have never since, however repugnant to my feelings, dared to refuse them a similar gratification.—But stop, Mr Madrake, I cannot enter that wood; I never do take such walks when out of Lady Montgomery's company."

“ And will you really prefer that very uninteresting piece of park ?”

“ Well, any way you please, Mr Madrake. But which of the rentals do you mean to begin with first ?”

“ My dear Miss Hyndford, since you are not now at —— Castle, pray what pretty simple looking figure’s that coming athwart us from the other side ?”

“ Let us get out of the heat, if you please,” answered Miss Hyndford, making towards the wood, and less inclined to see than to hear at this important instant.

“ Well, Miss Hyndford, good morning; I am not Lord Fiddle-faddle, and will not take upon me the persecution of a pursuit. But see, it comes upon me !”—and Mr Madrake paused, for he saw immediately before him, not the retiring graceful Lady Juliana, whom he had half-expected to see approach, after the manner of all heroines of old, with a harp and lute in one hand, and a bouquet of flowers in the other, but a simply dressed sun-browned young maiden, wearing an open straw-bonnet; her hair

simply braided back in defiance of the mode; a small wicker basket suspended negligently from her arm; and smiling in all the happiness of health, exercise, and good spirits.

“ Lady Juliana, I thought we should never have found you !” exclaimed Miss Hyndford, keeping steadfast in her position, as if to insinuate that she had already commenced her retreat; and keeping up the much-noticed garden fan between herself and the path that led to the adjoining grove—“ O pray, my dear Lady Juliana, don’t mind a word of what Mr Madrake says. I assure you, I had some difficulty in keeping him at bay myself.”

“ Wherever the roses grow there will be thorns; and *here*, the thistles have got plenty of room to expand.”

“ Do not permit your imagination to outrun your judgment, Mr Madrake,” returned Lady Juliana in the same under-tone. “ Miss Hyndford I *know* to be a very excellent person.”

“ There have been *worse*, I believe.”

“ Mr Madrake, do you then insist upon bringing trouble and destruction upon our

happy dwelling; and that, too, through the un-offending medium of Miss Hyndford?"

"Talking of me, I hear," here interrupted Miss Hyndford, now making an effort to join them. "Pray, Lady Juliana, shall I tell you how ably he dissected my whole fortune this morning? You don't know Mr Madrake, I am afraid."

"You forget what *we* were talking about before Lady Juliana joined us, Miss Hyndford;" and, deliberately taking possession of the garden fan, he looked the caution which he dared not to pronounce.

"I shall marry a nobleman about forty, with twenty thousand a-year," thought Miss Hyndford—(O ye poor luckless fortune-hunters! for such, despite of age, despite of ugliness, was Miss Hyndford's own modest degree of ambition)—"and therefore must not quarrel with this man Madrake. Perhaps, by giving him a little occasional degree of encouragement, I may come more perfectly to know my grounds;" and in this charitable spirit she thought proper to deign him a reply.

"Forget! Mr Madrake? Pray, do not mis-

take me for an Ingrate. But be so kind as restore me my fan—It doesn't do for you to keep that trophy, and pay your devoirs to Lady Juliana (of whom, if I mistake not, I believe I have some reason to be jealous) at the same time."

"The fan, if *I* mistake not, is Lady Juliana's," returned Madrake, laughing; "but if you wish to regain it, you may have it by taking my arm.—" *Is this* your most excellent person?" he added, in a whisper to Lady Juliana.

Miss Hyndford made no answer, but left the fan to its fate. The nobleman about forty, with his twenty thousand a-year, might hear of this piece of condescension. And Miss Hyndford went over to Lady Juliana's other side.

"Well, Miss Hyndford, you will repent of this yet, I suspect," said Madrake; whose great desire seemed now to be Lady Juliana's amusement.

"Repent, perhaps, of having ever met you at all, Mr Madrake."

"Gently, Mr Madrake," whispered Lady Juliana, who no doubt read in these words a

repetition of Mrs Augustus Maringle's 'Perfectly obedient.' "But here comes Marianne, I declare, with Miss Hyndford's parasol."

"Would to God you had the happiness of the whole human race in your keeping, Lady Juliana!" returned Madrake, with pathos, "and then none of it would be lost.—'We should implore the gods to preserve and prosper you, with that peculiar providence which your great and numerous virtues, and particularly your remarkable piety, have deserved.'"*

"Mr Madrake, won't you hand me my parasol?" cried Miss Hyndford, recovering from her *dépit*, and motioning Marianne and the parasol to keep out of the way for a little. "Really, Lady Juliana must have had enough of your nonsense."

"Well, if you would both go away, and take the parasol with you."

"Why, I dare say you are in the right, Mr Madrake: it is now four to a minute; and then, after so much talk, and, I am told, a six-

* Pliny's Epistles to Trajan.

and-twenty miles ride, there is no wonder that you can no longer keep up with us."

"Well, that is certainly a most accomplished speech, my dear friend."

"Dear friend!—Mr Madrake, you really seem to abound in mistakes.—But come, Lady Juliana, we must not wait to hear any more after that."

Madrake having now become a little *passé*, or so, had lost so much of his self-conceit, if he ever had any, as induced him to reduce the time occupied by his toilet from fifty minutes to five; and having thus got rid of his two female *employées*, he dashed away in search of what his fancy had at first, but for the interference of Miss Hyndford, prompted; and which was, to explore alone, and unobserved, the seats and scenes of the Lady Juliana's bounty and benevolence; the road to which had already been pointed out to him by the little wicker basket, and its fair proprietrix, as they both came tripping gaily o'er the sward.

He returned to Champ Fleury, and finished his toilet as hastily as he could.—"Perhaps,"

he said to himself, “ Lady Juliana assumes to herself the reputation of *two* characters ; and I am now only to see her in that benevolent housewife department, which is the best calculated to secure fame where there is a scarcity of persons to admire.”

But, no ; on entering the library where Lady Montgomery had assembled her friends before going to dinner, he saw before him the same dignified and accomplished person whom he had first met in the withdrawing room of the Viscountess Aloof ; the same gentleness, the same unobtrusive dignity, and the same lady-like decorum, propriety, and reserve. Her manner expressed, too, only one wish—a desire to please ; and she seemed now prepared to gratify and delight, where she could not otherwise serve or oblige.

He had most occasion, however, to admire her fortitude, when, after the usual routine of the dinner, Miss Hyndford continued to ramble through a whole volume of music, good, bad, and indifferent ; with the agreeable addition of an occasional song, sung in a broken half-

cracked voice, entirely out of time, and entirely out of tune ; in a word—flat, stale, and unprofitable.

“ Ah ! very well, very well, indeed !” she observed, as that lady finished a song which had the rare advantage of being a little better than the rest. “ Mr Madrake, I am *sure* you must have liked that.”

“ Well, Lady Juliana, I think them all very pretty,” interposed Miss Hyndford ; not so much pleased with the compliment, as indignant that her meed of praise should have been so very scantily dealt out. “ Mr Madrake, what say you ?”

“ Is it of your singing you wish me to give my opinion, Miss Hyndford ?” said Madrake, who was sitting at chess with Lady Montgomery.

“ Why, Mr Madrake, I didn’t just exactly mean *that*,” rejoined Miss Hyndford with a smile, which, though sweet and placid, displayed the most ineffable self-sufficiency ; “ but if you like, you can let me hear your opinion of that too.”

“ Well, then, I allow you the honour of being the *very worst* singer I ever heard.”

“ He ! he ! he ! Well, Mr Madrake, you are so amusing. But what, really, is now your candid opinion ?”

“ My *candid* opinion, Ma’am ?”

“ Yes, Mr Madrake, your *candid* opinion ?”

“ Then I must candidly apply to your singing, Ma’am, what Madame de Stael has said of literature, which is, ‘ that good taste can never supply the place of genius ; for, where there is no genius, the best proof of taste would be, not to sing at all.’ ”

“ What ! Mr Madrake ! do you suppose, because I have got good taste, that I want genius ?”

“ I should rather say, Ma’am, that you want —both the one and the other.”

“ Mr Madrake !!!” screamed Miss Hyndford.

“ Mr Madrake !” cried Lady Montgomery.

“ Mr Madrake !” exclaimed Lady Juliana.

“ But, Mr Madrake, Mr Madrake,” continued Miss Hyndford, endeavouring to conquer her fierce feelings of wrath and pride, in consideration of the information she was likely to derive from his experience in the affair of the rentals ;

“ of what particular fault, may I ask, am I guilty ; for, very possibly, I may be able to correct it ? ”

“ You *are* able to correct it.”

“ Pray inform me, then,” said the lady, pausing in almost breathless suspense.

“ Never sing another note.”

“ You are right, Mr Madrake,” returned the songstress with suppressed rage. “ I ought long since to have learned the folly of throwing pearls before ”——

——“ Miss Hyndford !!! ” shrieked Madrake.

“ Miss Hyndford ! ” cried Lady Juliana.

“ Miss Hyndford ! ” exclaimed the Countess.

“ And can you really defend such insolence, ladies ?——But it does not signify, Champ Fleury never at any time agreed very well with my health. In fact, I have to repent that I ever saw it at all ! ”

“ *Dear* Miss Hyndford, do not distress us by such a remark ; ” and both ladies, aware of the coming mischief, flew off to Miss Hyndford’s assistance.

That lady, however, kept her hands fixed upon the keys of the piano-forte, and her eyes not less devoutly fastened upon the opposite music-book.

“*Dear* Miss Hyndford ! do not agitate yourself ; he is such a curious man, Mr Madrake, and only intended to try the strength of your patience a little, we believe.”

Miss Hyndford answered never a word ; and the two ladies went on with their consolations and condolences. At last a terrific scream announced that the ice had broke. Lady Juliana and the Countess each seized upon a hand, hoping thereby, we dare say, to soften what they could not cure. But, no : Miss Hyndford screamed, and screamed, and screamed, till, too hoarse and exhausted to utter another last shriek, though not at all unwilling to prolong Lady Juliana and her mother’s absolute terror and alarm, Miss Hyndford now sat calm, and, to all appearance, quiet, on her seat.

The sullen fit that now succeeded seemed even more afflicting to them than Miss Hynd-

ford's former convulsions; and both Lady Montgomery and her daughter turned to Madrake with a look which seemed to supplicate for his intercession and assistance.

“Leave her alone with me for a few minutes, my dear Lady Montgomery, and I shall try what I can do to make amends for my terrible fault.”

“What! leave me! abandon me! Lady Montgomery?—Has his insolence come to this !!!”

Lady Montgomery hesitated.

“I insist upon it, my dear Lady Montgomery; and Miss Hyndford herself will thank you for obeying my request.”

“Don't believe him, Lady Montgomery—don't believe him. O Juliana! Juliana! Juliana, Julian”—and Miss Hyndford, who had now gathered voice, went off in a second set of screams, still shriller and more piercing than the first.

“Retire for one moment, and take your mother with you,” said Madrake to Lady Juliana; “retire at least to the other end of the apartment.”

“ Miss Hyndford,” he continued, coming up to the lady’s ear, and seizing the first opportunity that occurred to dart in a word, “ instead of giving vent in such bitter terms to your resentment, I would rather advise you to bestow a little of your pity. You are not aware, perhaps, that I am a”—— and he reduced his voice to the lowest possible note,—“ *a mad-man !*”

Miss Hyndford loosened her fingers from the piano-forte keys, and her eyes from the music-book, and then turned calmly round upon him a look, in which was now helplessly reflected fear, horror, and amazement ;—for, of all mortal antipathies, to her, mad people were the worst.

“ It’s the fact, my dear Miss Hyndford, I assure you it’s the fact. I have it from both parents ; and it is the disease which no remedy can reach, as we are told, but death.”

“ Say you so, Mr Madrake ?”——and Miss Hyndford’s voice died away in a sort of asthmatic wheeze, as if the spirit which had once inspired it was now journeying on towards its eternal rest.

“ Too true, too true, too true, Miss Hyndford ; and I am only surprised that the previous eccentricity of my conduct did not enable you sooner to find it out.”

“ Very eccentric, certainly,” returned Miss Hyndford, in the same stifled voice. “ But how is it that you go at large ?”

“ There are interludes, you know, my dear Miss Hyndford ; and there are certain signs, like the symptoms that sometimes foretell a change of weather, by which I can ascertain how it’s to fare with me. Only you must never scream ; you might as well have trod upon gunpowder.”

“ Did I really tread upon gunpowder !” exclaimed Miss Hyndford, without remarking the very palpable distinction between *interlude* and *interval*.

“ O no, my dear Miss Hyndford, not so bad as that ;—only people who are subject to nervous attacks, like me, are often strangely affected merely from sympathy.”

“ Sympathy !!!”

“ No use of making an argument of the trans-

action; only, I trust you will no longer find it difficult to forgive me. In fact, when I think of your speech about the throwing of the pearls, I may compliment you on your *wit*, as well as on your music.—You did not believe, of course, one single word of what I said?”

“Well, Mr Madrake, I confess I did *not* believe one word of what you said; and I”——

—“But we detain Lady Montgomery and Lady Juliana,” interrupted Madrake; “and I trust you will no longer withhold from them the happy intelligence that we have, at last, come to some sort of good understanding again.”

“O, most happy, Mr Madrake.”

“Well, ladies, you may advance. Miss Hyndford sees at last that I am only a poor little innocent creature, fit only for tittle-tattle.—And now, Lady Juliana, will you favour us with a song?”

Lady Juliana, pressed by Miss Hyndford, consented.

“Sweet — careful — tasteful — and pathetic! Dear Lady Juliana! sing no more.”

“No more! Mr Madrake?”

“ Yes, Miss Hyndford, no more. People ought to sing but a little at a time. Like those who relish music because they have long been deprived of it—the appetite, or, rather, what “ we of science ” call *fresh feeling*, must never be altogether clogged or fatigued.—Sing no more, Lady Juliana, and we shall dream of thy soft melodious plaint all night.”

“ Well, Mr Madrake, I thought nobody could get enough of music.”

“ Quite a vulgar mistake, Miss Hyndford. Or, if *you* think not, I shall instantly appeal to Lady Haut-ton.”

“ Or to Lady Lochaber,” observed the Countess, taking her eyes from off the book (Almacks) which she had contrived to pick up during her long banishment to the far corner. “ But how came you to make up your feud with Miss Hyndford so easily, Mr Madrake?”

“ Why I threatened to go mad—swore I *was* mad; and now, you see her as well—as *can be expected*.”

“ Mr Madrake, is that the way you talk of the most terrible of all calamities?”

“ My dear Miss Hyndford, what can you expect from a rogue, a renegade, and a deception ?”

“ A deception ! Mr Madrake !!! Pray, Lady Juliana, can you tell me where I am ; for I really think I feel my senses reeling.”

“ It is nothing new, Miss Hyndford, to know that you are beginning to waver. *I* waver always.”

“ If you please, Mr Madrake,” now gently interposed Lady Juliana, “ I am going to sing.”

“ Speak with me first, Juliana,” said the Countess, laying down her book : and Lady Montgomery recommended to her daughter’s care, certain acts of charitable benevolence to be performed on the following morn.

“ Miss Hyndford,” cried Madrake, now stealing into Lady Juliana’s seat at the piano-forte, “ you and I ought certainly to make up a paction together, if it were no more than to circumvent the machinations of that mother and daughter :—Won’t you agree, eh ?”

“ Mr Madrake, I *beseech*”—

—“ Tush, child, don’t you see Lady Juliana

coming towards us? you would not wish, surely, that we should confide our mutual penchant to *her*?"

"Mr Madrake, you certainly go beyond —— But, Sir, to make a long matter short, I tell you I will *not* put up with this any longer."

"Miss Hyndford will not hear your song, Lady Juliana."

"Yes, I may hear the *song*," said Miss Hyndford, half reseating herself.

"Well then, ladies, I will not." And their unruly swain now darted in amongst the massy folds of a ten-leaved India screen, from which hopeful position he continued occasionally to shew head, whenever Lady Juliana happened, in the course of her vocation, to pitch upon any thing that sounded like a high note; and with such a grotesque attitude of wonder and astonishment, as rivalled even the best exertions of the heroes of Almacks itself.

"Stop, Lady Juliana!" exclaimed Miss Hyndford, just as that lady had concluded the last line of the first verse. "I must not have you to be a pulcinello to that strange man,

or rather monster, though the name is difficult to pronounce. Lady Montgomery, I must bid you good-night; I feel tired and somewhat headached."

"And is there, then, no parting word for me?" cried Madrake, shaking all the immense folds of the ten-leaved screen in her face at once.

Miss Hyndford left Lady Juliana to ring for Marianne and the other maid, and quitted the room with a degree of haste that implied a pretty round belief that Madrake had some intentions of extinguishing her on the road.

"Well, Mr Madrake, all the conspiracies that ever happened in a day, are scarcely more fertile in adventure than this. But what are we to do to pacify Miss Hyndford? You know that, at present, I am answerable for her comfort, I suppose?—You may leave us, Juliana."

"My dear Lady Montgomery, do not suspect me," answered Madrake, seriously, "of any design of diverting myself merely for the sake of diversion, or of being diverted; for, to confess the truth to you, I had frequently to exert myself to talk to Miss Hyndford in the manner I

did: But your Ladyship, I have learned from experience, can listen."

"We all have felt," continued Madrake, "Miss Hyndford's disposition to be very troublesome; and have also experienced the inconvenience of having in our immediate society a person who is perpetually in the habit of seeking attentions, which it is also her habit as frequently to resent. It was proper, therefore, to surprise her into a new system of tactics; and I think I have done it.

"Not, however, to be tormented with Miss Hyndford, but to see Champ Fleury, I came hither; and my imagination, interested in the amiable manners, as well as affected by the excellent reputation of its inmates, sought only the opportunity of contemplating them at leisure, and contemplating them in quiet. In their place, however, I must constantly have found Miss Hyndford; and my promised expectations must have failed, had I not possessed the courage and *audace* to act as I have done; and by rendering myself odious to her, escape at once and for ever the persecution of her importance.

“ To-morrow, then, my dear Lady Montgomery, I expect to explore the perhaps too little haunted vicinity of your dwelling-place; and, if you can so far honour a person who has it not in his power to improve in any way your prosperity, you will permit the Lady Juliana, at least for this one day, to be his safeguard and guide. He is induced, moreover, to this request, because he believes you to be sensible of his great respect; as well as from a desire to have his path enlightened by the presence of a good being, who is not less worthy of admiration than of love !”

“ My dear Mr Madrake, so slight a favour does not require so fine a display of eloquence. Lady Juliana is at *home*, and will find it a pleasure to be of any possible assistance to the tastes or inclinations of her friends. Miss Hyndford I shall keep beside myself.”

“ How dangerous is enthusiasm, Lady Montgomery. Had I not found in you a character equally benevolent, consistent, and humane, I might have lived to repent the rashness of such

a request.—But I see you have not quite finished your book ; and, perhaps, it is already late.”

The Countess rose, and Madrake, pressing her hand for a moment respectfully to his lips, took leave for the night.

CHAPTER XI.

“ ’Twas then by that soft light I brought
Vague glimmering visions to her view,—
Catches of radiance, that led to nought,
And vistas, with a void seen through,—
Dwellings of bliss that opening shone,
Then closed, dissolved, and left no trace.”

Loves of the Angels.

“ HERE’S a *very* strange story,” cried Miss Hyndford, laying down a letter upon the breakfast table, in order to pounce more conveniently upon the remaining remnants of a cooling cup of tea. “ Very strange upon my word !”

“ Well, Mr Madrake can go away, if it’s to be told, my dear Miss Hyndford.”

Miss Hyndford put down her cup, and took up the letter again, with a look that said, “ I

have repented of all my condescensions in that quarter, and therefore the gentleman's opinion can now be to me of no moment—no importance. “The news, Lady Montgomery, comes all the way from Fife. The first *ondit* mentions the death of twelve American plants at the R——. The second contains the news. Shall I read?”

“O, pray, by all means.”

“Well, then, listen.—But first I should wish the only gentleman in the company to put out that poodle dog; I cannot endure when any thing stares at me.—Hem—[Miss Hyndford reads.] ‘It is confidently asserted, they say, that the affairs of a certain Lady L. (Lady Lumberfield, you will please to remark) of L—— Castle, are in a state of the most perfect disorganization; and that her revenues have been at last put into the hands of the Messrs Regular of Edinburgh, by a vote of the principal creditors, who have also thought fit and good to parcel off the ancient residence of L——d Castle amongst them; and all this notwithstanding the affecting circumstances of Lady L—— herself, whom their rigo-

rous proceedings have already brought, it is said, to the brink of the grave.'

" *Ondit* the third. ' Mrs Fife of Fife-hall lies at this moment at the point of death, having travelled all night on purpose to intercede with Colonel B. and the rest of Lady L's creditors in her behalf; and having by that means caught a cold, which has terminated in what Dr Mixstuff calls phrenitis.—P. S. It is said, that every thing that has been done, was by the suggestion of Lord Viscount Aloof himself.'

" So much for a Fife rental, good people ! I wish only my own little scrap had been, like Hyndshaw, in some other place. A deplorable picture, indeed ! As for Mrs Fife, if you had all suffered from her as much as myself, you would say, that if she had only died, she had only been well away. She is a perfect pest to the Fife people, we all agree."

" Well, now, from all that I hear, I rather like Mrs Fife," said Lady Juliana. " She is not a very refined person, it is true ; but any one who, like her, thinks so much of other people, and so little of herself, must needs be rather an

amiable sort of creature. I see that you agree with me, Mr Madrake."

"Of course, the commonalty all judge for themselves, you know, Lady Juliana," observed Miss Hyndford, triumphing not a little at her opportunity for "taking down" Madrake. "But what's to be done with poor Lady Lumberfield? By the bye, I *did* hear something about the Aloofs, and a great crowd along with them, when I was last at ———; and, if I recollect right, I travelled away about the same time that forty or fifty of them came, or rather *tried* to come, away from Lumberfield; for I heard some very odd stories about that same piece of business not two days after I crossed to the other side. Amongst other small accidents, Sir Henry and Lady Maringle were both said to have been killed; and all owing, too, to Lord Fiddle-faddle, who would engage all the horses to carry himself and his mineral catalogue—himself, I suppose, the least important personage of the lot—through Fife.

"I ought to answer this letter, don't you think?" she added, aiming a second extermi-

nating sword at Madrake ; “ and I shall take this very day to it. But, pray, when did any of you see Mr Inverary ? ”

Mr Inverary, gentle reader, was one of those “ every body’s body,” who possess the dexterous faculty of praising every body with advantage, and the last always the best. He had passed a portion of his early years behind the wooden walls, not of Troy, but of Troyweight, and which service had probably engendered that habit of universal servility so conspicuous in that gentleman’s general abroad. To proceed—Mr Inverary was proprietor of a small farm in Lady Montgomery’s neighbourhood, and rented a few odd acres from her Ladyship herself. He came a willing slave whenever he heard of Miss Hyndford’s being at Champ Fleury ; and was accordingly treated by that lady with that capricious sort of tyranny, which delights, however, to have always in sight the object on which it may wish to discharge itself. To finish Mr Inverary’s picture—he had no family, and was separated from a bad wife. To go a little farther—his wife might die, and the imbecility of age might

tempt Miss Hyndford, proud as she was, to turn her thoughts more particularly upon himself. Miss Hyndford, on the other hand, contrived always to ascertain whether his said bad wife were still in the land of the living, so that she might be able to *cut* him without loss of time, should ever such an event as a bad wife's demise give room for the public to speculate at her cost.

“ Mr Inverary, my dear Miss Hyndford ! why you know you behaved so cross to him about the affair of the glove.”

“ Dear me, did I ?”

“ Nay, you were *very* cross, my dear Miss Hyndford.”

“ Well, but that needn't surely keep him away. Pray, let us have him.”

“ Juliana, my love, will you write the cards ? Mr Madrake is in no hurry.”

“ O, pray, no card, Lady Montgomery ; he knows me to be here, and he might shew it. We must only *allow* him to come, and not commit ourselves so far as to request any thing about the business. Mrs Augustus Maringle was

the most prudent person I ever knew about these matters—excepting always the noble family of Aloof. She is very popular with them too, I hear; much more so than the elder brother's wife, though she is one of themselves."

"Pray, then, send the message yourself, Miss Hyndford."

"Well, Lady Montgomery, you do commit sad contre-temps! What would the world say, should I send a message to such a person as Mr Inverary? In fact, I *know* that he would be the first to tell it: I am aware, from experience, what are the customs of the lower orders. But pray, make haste, or we may not find him at home for us."

"My dear," she continued, as Lady Juliana returned bonnet in hand, "you will bitterly repent your walk with Mr Madrake. The man has not got two single ideas in his head. Don't go."

"My dear Miss Hyndford, Mamma has promised, and——but here he comes. Now, Sir, shall we proceed?"—— * * * * *

"Stay, Lady Juliana," said Madrake paus-

ing, “let us quit these flowery terraces and fairy walks—they are fitter for those transient glimpses of sunny weather so congenial to the spring-time—and take a wider range. The sun is bright and high, and those umbrageous woods may serve to shield us from his power, without lessening the effect of his majesty !”

“You are poetical, Mr Madrake.”

“I am any thing, and every thing, Lady Juliana ! Originally, however, my mind was cast in a vast gigantic mould ; but time, that fell destroyer of illusions, has left me but a remnant ; and I think I must leave it with you, Lady Juliana, for you are—shall I confess it ?—what my very fondest wishes conceived,—loved—imagined !”

“Mr Madrake !”——

—“Hold ! It is not for us, Lady Juliana, to mistake the terms upon which we are henceforth to meet. I love you only for your goodness, your unaffected piety, and unoffending worth. Your beauty I leave to your lovers.——But stop, does not that gentle path to the right conduct through a sweet and plaintive

grove, canopied by the waving sprays of forest boughs, and tuned to rest by the fall of waters and the song of birds? And further on, a lowly urn half-buried in an ivy thicket, and deep impervious to the passing eye of heedless stranger,—the monument of some loved friend.”

“ Mr Madrake”—and Lady Juliana tried to speak.

“ What ! Lady Juliana ! and have you so little taste for my reviving and inspired muse, as to let the roses pass away from off thy cheek, and the smile of pleasure from thine eye ? Thou art pale too, Lady Juliana, and may have need of rest. But in yon thick grove of spreading linden-trees, now seared and yellow, you will find the seat of soft repose, calmly retired even from the sound of murmuring waters,—forsaken even by the birds, whom fancied men, borne high aloft, for ever scare from this our sweet retreat !—Musing still in pensive loneliness, Juliana ! do you hope to interrupt our fate ?”

“ I am better,” returned Lady Juliana, while a gentle smile, half-pleased half-sorrowful, passed

slowly over her cheek. "I was thinking, Mr Madrake, how well you must have studied the scenery of Champ Fleury, though only from hearsay."

"I have been here before, Lady Juliana."

"Here before! Mr Madrake?"

"Yes, a band of us traversed the country in search of Syntax, some two three years ago, and I recollect of my having thrust myself so far upon the path which we now tread.—But let us seat ourselves, for *you* must henceforth act the guide."

"But I cannot talk, Mr Madrake."

"Well, then, you shall leave that to me. How sweetly mourns the wind! Like the last song of *Corinne* when it speaks of the angel of death.—'His wings are white, but he walks enveloped in night! Does the wind murmur? we fancy we hear his voice. At the close of day, the shadows which cover the fields appear like the foldings of his flowing robe!'"

"How often have I repeated these verses," said Lady Juliana, as they continued to walk on. "Like the echoes of an immortal spirit,

they seem to recall the thoughts of mortals to the still inaccessible mysteries of existence and of death !”

“ They are indeed beautiful !” replied Madrake, now quitting the broader path which the inhabitants of Champ Fleury had cut through the wood, and beneath whose shady branches ran the beautiful waters of the S—— ; “ and, like all recollections which detach us from the present, they conjure back again the spectacle of the past. This way,”——and taking her hand, he led her through a woody glade of untrodden grass, closely encircled by the varied foliage of thickly intermingled trees.

He was on the point of conducting her into the interior of the belt which opposed their progress, when the hand of Lady Juliana, which he had taken unconsciously, dropped cold and moist from his hold.

“ Can this place, too, be known to him, then ?” she murmured to herself ; “ and yet there is no other access to this spot, and chance could hardly have revealed it to him.

“ Stop, Mr Madrake !” she exclaimed, drawing her hand slowly across her forehead ; “ I feel faint and weary, and therefore must think of returning homewards.”

“ We will return presently,” answered Madrake, without remarking her violent agitation. “ Only I am tired of this same wooded path, and would fain seek some other more varied, and, if possible, more sequestered situation. But, take courage, we are surely near some rustic grot or seat, where, secluded from the eye of wandering idler, we may yet converse a little longer amidst the beautiful sublimity of nature—— Come.”

“ Mr Madrake,” exclaimed Lady Juliana, making a sudden effort,—“ perhaps you are not aware, but no other footstep than my own ever penetrated to this retreat—except——But that is long, long ago ; and that companion is long since—dead !”

“ There *is*, then, some mystic bower or grot,” rejoined Madrake. “ How extraordinary, that a mere blind, or rather obstinate chance, should have led me so directly towards the very

very place. In this manner may we suppose miracles to be accounted for.—But we will not intrude upon your fairy habitation, Lady Juliana.”

“Nay, Sir, we will not disdain our present advantages. I only felt for a moment the terrors of a person who sees in every the most simple action something that reminds her of the time that is past.”

“Such unexpected coincidences are sometimes to be met with, however, Lady Juliana.—But stay, take care, this little rustic bridge is not just so regular in its economy as we could have wished.”

The spot which they now reached was a jutting promontory of rock that advanced abruptly upon the river, over the extreme verge of which reposed a sort of aërial nest, whose rustic columns were intertwined and curtained by the hanging boughs of the adjoining woods. Deep in the valley below, the course of the stream was broken by a natural cascade, whose now tumbling waters danced in perpetual eddies by its side: around were bedded the woods in all the

luxury of foliage, and rearing here and there, aloft upon their waving sides, a few groups of those rude fantastic shapes so familiar to the bolder outline of nature. Wimpling soft beneath their waving branches, the sparkling waters of the S—— peeped forth in little glassy mirrors, catching and reflecting back the silver sunbeams as they fell upon its smoother surface; and, glittering far beyond in distant perspective, a ruffled torrent fell leaping upon the lone and solitary depths below. Above, and broad around, was the deep blue canopy of heaven.

At this moment a few masses of those autumn clouds, sometimes so resplendent with light and heat, were scattered upon the horizon, while their deep and lengthened shadows served to relieve and to refresh the sameness of continual brightness. * * * * *

“ Whatever the poet has said about the pensive calm, &c. of gentle twilight and declining even,” said Madrake, leaning his arm upon a moss-encircled pillar of the grot, and looking devoutly upwards to the summer heaven; “ still, with the exception of those few transient mo-

ments of sunrise and sunset, there is nothing in nature to equal the grand effulgence of glorious day ! Poets, artists, and lovers, give us only that which they can best describe ; but what can be said of the sun ? or, in the language of Ossian, what can resemble his power and his sublimity ?

“ ‘ O thou that rollest above, round as the shield of my fathers ! Whence are thy beams, O sun ! thy everlasting light !

“ ‘ Thou comest forth in thy awful beauty, and the stars hide themselves in the sky : the moon, cold and pale, sinks in the western wave. But thou thyself movest alone : Who can be a companion of thy course ?

“ ‘ The oaks of the mountains fall ; the mountains themselves decay with years ; the ocean shrinks and grows again ; the moon herself is lost in heaven : but thou art for ever the same, rejoicing in the brightness of thy course !

“ ‘ When the world is dark with tempests, when thunder rolls and lightning flies, thou lookest in thy beauty from the clouds, and laughest at the storm !’

“ This is the language of praise; but who can reveal to our senses the sublime influence of his light?”

“ Without him we had no being or existence,” said Lady Juliana. “ But have you been so familiar with the higher celestial objects, that you have not one solitary word of praise for *this*?” and she pointed to the scenery around.

“ It is better, I should think, to cherish in silence that sentiment of admiration,” replied Madrake, “ which it appears always so foolish in us to attempt to express. Let us save ourselves, therefore, those hacknied instances of approbation, which, when happiest, only nauseate and fatigue; and listen to the lamentation of the wind, as it mingles with the hoarser notes of the troubled waters that now roll beneath our feet!——Have you *no* recollections, Lady Juliana, which would accord with the sad melancholy which seems to us engendered in these sounds?”

“ I *have* recollections, Mr Madrake,” answered Lady Juliana with emotion; “ but they are

of a character too little extraordinary to interest you. In fact, my life presents scarcely one single feature of romance; its tenor is simple, equal, easy. I enjoy the benefits of fortune in just proportion to my rank; the kindness of my mother leaves me nothing to wish for or desire; and I have no particular sorrow, save that one regret felt in remembrance of the dead!" and she fixed her soft blue eyes upon the initials of a name cut in the moss.

"Some twin brother, or other friend now no more, perhaps," thought Madrake; and his eye fell upon the remains of a small skiff that lay broken upon the opposite strand. "She comes hither alone, too, and retains the secret of this spot merely that she may indulge her recollections undisturbed."

"You do not bring Miss Hyndford with you, I presume," he said.

Lady Juliana appeared sunk in a deep and profound reverie.

"Perhaps some lover——*Juliana!*"

The sound startled her; and she rose with a hurried aspect from the sort of rustic couch or

bench on which she had rested herself, as if alarmed by the discovery of her secret.—“It is *you*, then, Mr Madrake,” she said, placing her hand with an unconscious movement upon his arm. “I thought”——

And she paused, unwilling, or rather unable, to finish what she had intended to repeat.”

“Dear Lady Juliana, forgive me if I have unwittingly made a discovery: really, the music of the groves puts sad fancies into one’s head. But why so sad, Lady Juliana? Do not the pretty warblers wake to smiles? It seems rather as if——

“An other quhile the lytill nyghtingale,
That sat upon the twiggis wold I chide,
And say, rycht thus, quhare are thy notis small,
That thou of love has sung this morrow tyde?
For Venus’ sake, the blissfull goddesse clere,
Sing on again, and mak my Lady chere.”

“Miss Hyndford was in the right then, Sir, when she warned me to distrust your powers of conversation in a tête-a-tête.”

“Nay, Lady Juliana, do not be angry with

me; for, though I must always approve of your goodness, I can never hope to interfere with your more personal sentiments. The streamlet that descends from yonder distant hills would sooner flow with tears, than that I should cause you one single feeling that could awaken for a moment your displeasure or resentment."

"I have no secrets, Mr Madrake," replied Lady Juliana, smiling. "But, come; our way is far, and we may lose the favourite compliments of Mr Inverary, when he finds himself again restored to favour. Shall we return by the Deer park?"

"By no means. Let us rather leave those pretty creatures to be eulogized by Miss Hyndford's prattle, and wander on amidst 'the gloom of pathless woods,' lending our ears unto the 'hollow winds,' upon whose thin-aired bosoms still dance the ghosts of parties who have gone before;—or tuneful lend our husky voices to the plaint of rills, and—mingle *Buffo* with their *bubbles*."

"And has the hero of the last song of *Corinne*, or the bard of the son of Ossian, returned

so soon to the notable profession of a caricaturist, Mr Madrake?"

"Nay, Lady Juliana, all is not the gift of industry, but of accident. Had I been born with a defect in my speech, I should never have been able to have afforded you one single *iota* of my idiosyncrasy. But, as it is, I am capable of attempting the most heroic and wonderful achievements. My mind is only one vast profundity of ambition; and my spirit, awaiting the proper moment of action, only dances about at present in the pastime of vagaries.—*Juliana!*"

"You will attempt any thing to amuse, I see, Mr Madrake," returned Lady Juliana; "else I should not have started so at the sound of my own name."

"Amiable Lady Juliana! do not—now that we are again in sight of the garden-terraces of beautiful Champ Fleury—do not charge me with unkindness, because I employed every artifice to obtain the much desired expression of tenderness and sensibility; nor think unkindly of me that I studied every lineament and expres-

sion of your countenance, with all the keen anxiety of a painter in search of the Beau Ideal. I design you for a principal character in the novel with which I am now engaged, and for that purpose was it that I endeavoured to render myself acquainted with every the minutest traits of your character and disposition. For that, I came to Champ Fleury. For that, I penetrated to the most secret haunts of your bounty ; and for that, I requested of Lady Montgomery that we might be permitted to explore these woods together and alone. For that, I watched your most secret looks, when, turning accidentally aside, I found a way to your secret grotto ; and employed in pronouncing your name those gentle and affecting accents, by which I guessed that you might have been perchance one day addressed.

“ Nay, Lady Juliana, moderate your astonishment. I never *was* a plain or ordinary character, and now since the light is falling upon me, I must needs shine forth. With *you*, however, I have kept nothing in the dark.”

“ In imitation then of the first Vivian Grey, or of Trebeck”——

—“ Nay, I am simple, tranquil and domestic, and my muse must ramble only amidst the quiet shades of social life. Nevertheless, I wanted the presence of some perfect character to embellish it, and I have found you !”

“ Perhaps you have also found Miss Hyndford ?”

“ No : She only plays the part of the Punchinello.”

“ And you told her so ?”

“ No : to you alone have I confided my secret. To be unknown is, in our present day and generation, to be great.”

“ But can I permit you—serpent-like—to fasten on the unsuspecting unoffending dispositions of my friend ?” demanded Lady Juliana, laughing.

“ Be under no concern, Lady Juliana ; Miss Hyndford will merely be mentioned—only, without seeking to corrupt the good, I must shew something to avoid in the bad. But do not suspect me of lashing the lieges without a

reason. Miss Hyndford——But I will not prejudice you unnecessarily; only in the mean time you may take a hint.”

“ I’m afraid you really *are* wicked, Mr Madrake.”

“ Did I convince you of this when, contemplating the awful majesty of nature, I poured forth my soul in homage to the great Author of our being? or was I the malicious spirit you suppose, when, leaning pensive over that lone monument, I listened mournfully to the song of waters and the tune of birds? Did my eye contemplate only evil, when it sought pleasure in that angelic countenance? or my voice say wrong, when it pronounced the name so much esteemed—so much beloved?”

“ Well, Mr Madrake, I will not contend”—

“ Contend! Lady Juliana! Is it for a slave to contend with his master? Rather say, that, submissive at your feet, I await the honour of your pardon; and, with the pensive patience of a lover, sigh on for one more smile of confidence, if not of approbation!”

“ Very pretty ! very pretty ! Mr Madrake, Very pret’ ”——

—“ Gracious ! Miss Hyndford ! ”

“ O, we *hear*, we *hear* you.”

“ And Mr Inverary ! ” cried Lady Juliana, as that gentleman likewise appeared on the canvass.

“ We must separate then, Lady Juliana. At least, after *this* accident, you will not accuse me of being suspicious.—You know, too,” he added hastily, “ that I am no author.”

“ Not a *great* one,” cried Miss Hyndford, now making a junction, and who mistook the words “ no author,” which she had imperfectly overheard, for “ no flirt.”

“ As *yet*, you mean, my dear Miss Hyndford.”

“ O, no, you are never sufficiently agreeable to succeed.”

“ Then is love never lost ; and my own wit still safe within myself.”

“ Love was never by you ever found, I’m afraid, Mr Madrake.”

“ Perhaps you’re right ; for, when Lady Juliana leaves me, I find only Miss Hyndford ; and *she is not* love.”

“ Though Miss Hyndford is not love, that is not to say that she is *not lovely*,” simpered Mr Inverary, gently presenting himself at this important passage.

“ Thank you, Mr Inverary,” said the lady, dropping a pert curtsey, more in ridicule than in thanks.

“ O, my dear Madam, the simple truth requires no thanks, I should think.”

“ The *simple* truth !” exclaimed Madrake.

“ O, pray, Mr Madrake, don’t find fault with any body for defending their friends.—But, by the bye, since Lady Juliana and Lady Montgomery are both gone out of the way, I must take the liberty of introducing you to Mr Inverary myself. You will find him, at least, a person who *wishes* to be agreeable—whether he succeeds or not, I can’t say.”

“ You can never say any thing, my good Miss Hyndford ; at least, any thing in the least worthy to be heard.”

“ *Never*, Mr Madrake?—Stay, stay, stay, Mr Inverary, you are trampling upon Mr Florabelle’s gillyflower bed !”

“ Misfortunes never happen singly, I *know*,” said Mr Inverary, colouring in some confusion ; “ but I thought the greatest was hearing you scandalized, Miss Hyndford.” And Mr Inverary took out his large feet from amongst the stars and garters of Mr Florabelle’s gillyflower bed.

“ Scandalized, did you say, Mr Inverary? You surely do not know what you are about. But you don’t see that you have actually broke over by the stump Lady Juliana’s own favourite double stock—the very same, I declare, that gained the prize at last Thursday’s local competition.”

“ Well, then, I am sure I know not what to do,” sighed Mr Inverary, now getting as pale as he had got red ; for he had as little inclination to offend Lady Montgomery or her daughter, as to offend Miss Hyndford herself.

“ O, pray, Mr Inverary, don’t take it so very much to heart as all that. And as for Lady

Juliana's gillyflower, it's of no earthly moment. I remember myself, when I was at Lord Fiddle-faddle's, snapping the head off a plant with my parasol, which, it is said, blooms only once in the hundred years; and that, too, just the year before it was expected to blow."

"They only wanted to frighten you, I suppose, Ma'am," said Madrake; who stood with his watch in his hand, uncertain whether he should look over Blackwood's last Number, or loiter about till dinner.

"Then, Mr Madrake, they did not succeed; for I am not altogether sure whether I did not feel very well pleased in having procured my Lord Fiddle-faddle such a lasting disappointment."

"Amiable too, as well as lovely, Mr Inverary will say," returned Madrake. "Are you *deaf*, Mr Inverary?"

Mr Inverary gave an idiotical smile, and then an insane giggle; afraid on all sides of making a mistake.

"And so you think it a disgrace to defend me, Mr Inverary?" demanded Miss Hyndford,

now determined on gaining the day, whatever price it might cost her ally.

“ Why, Madam, whenever you really *require* to be defended,” cheeped Mr Inverary, who would most gladly have made his escape from the contest, “ you may always depend upon my exertions.”

“ *Require* to be defended, Mr Inverary !” shouted Miss Hyndford, who suspected his drift. “ Didn’t you hear him *positively affirm*, that I was neither amiable nor pretty, though you know to the contrary ?”

“ O you know, Madam, it was all a joke with Mr Madrake.” And Mr Inverary simpered again in the most insinuating and conciliating style of self-complacency.

“ No joke, Mr Inverary, I assure you,” cried Madrake scowling, now egged on by Miss Hyndford, who had also looked her watch to know how long she had to divert herself.

“ It will, at least, be difficult for Mr Madrake to make others of that opinion,” returned Mr Inverary, now obliged to be serious.

“ Mr Inverary,” resumed the lady, “ I am

sorry to say that is no sort of refutation to Mr Madrake's words. You must do something more than shuffle off, by merely begging the question."

"I know her to be very cunning, very vindictive, and very suspicious," said Mr Inverary in tribulation to himself. "This man, Madrake, is perhaps going to marry her; and they have made it up between them to sacrifice me, by way of a small punishment for the suspected presumption of my expectations, I suppose."

"Well, Sir, I am happy to perceive that you have the good sense to surrender your opinions to my discretion," again hallooed Madrake.

"Mr Inverary! Mr Inverary! will you allow yourself to be browbeat out of your senses? Can you submit to such treatment?"

"It's just as I expected, just as I expected," muttered Mr Inverary to himself. "She has excited his jealousy by repeating my compliments; and I must either fight and be killed, or die a coward."

"Mr Inverary has already submitted himself

to my better judgment, Miss Hyndford," said Madrake, getting still more interested in the trick; "and he will not venture again to rebel, I am persuaded, whatever may be your exertions to that effect."

"Mr Inverary !!!——But it's nonsense talking. I see that you are *no gentleman*; and I request, therefore, that you will not again intrude upon either my company or upon Lady Montgomery's—at least so long as we remain at Champ Fleury."

"With respect to yourself, Miss Hyndford, you may do as you choose," cried Madrake, triumphing not a little in the lady's sham defeat; "but with regard to Mr Inverary's reception by Lady Montgomery, I shall certainly think it my duty to support and protect every person who surrenders himself so entirely to my authority."

"To your authority, Mr Madrake!" screamed Miss Hyndford, who felt, in spite of the game she was playing, the greatest possible mortification at the very slight degree of devotion which her slave, Mr Inverary, had in the long

run displayed for her cause. “ I suppose you will say that Mr Inverary appeals to your mercy next?”

Madrake laughed, and nodded.

“ Well, I didn’t suppose impostors would have got any mercy in your quarter, Mr Madrake.”

“ Perhaps they may not. I have not made up my mind.”

“ Their *words* are nothing, only chaff,” be-
thought Mr Inverary again to himself. “ Time enough to flit, as an old proverb has it, when the house is falling. I doubt the fellow’s courage from his language.”

“ Well, Mr Inverary, though Mr Madrake may have carried the joke a little too far, I confess I did not quite anticipate the pleasure of being so very speedily deserted by my friends.”

“ Then, Madam, I must inform you, that, though I am no duellist, I shall always maintain at least my own opinions—and I think you are already acquainted with them. Perhaps that gentleman is not.”

“ I am not so *very* much interested in your

opinions, my good Mr Inverary," returned Miss Hyndford, assuming one of those 'screw me down' sort of smiles, or rather frowns in disguise. "I beg, gentlemen, that no body may come out of his place."

"Here is my arm, Mr Inverary," whispered Madrake? "for I think it's time for us to be in *our* place."

"You will stay behind, and gather me some of those musk and mock-orange flower leaves, Mr Inverary?" continued Miss Hyndford, still bent upon conquest, it seemed.

"Mr Inverary will not abandon me for a few musk and mock-orange flower leaves," cried Madrake, now determined, like Miss Hyndford, on taking the mastery of this second edition of Henry the Sixth.

"Mr Inverary, as a *favour*!" beseeched the lady.

"Mr Inverary, at your peril!" threatened Madrake.

"Mr Madrake dares you, Mr Inverary! he *dares* you!"

"The creature's mad! the creature's mad, Mr Inverary!"

“ Mad! Mr Madrake!!! Is it for *you* to talk in this strain?” cried Miss Hyndford at the top of her voice. “ Mr Inverary, *at your peril* stir one step, till you have got me the musk and the mock-orange flower leaves.”

“ My dear Mr Madrake”—and Mr Inverary stood no improper representation of the ass between the two bundles of hay.

“ O, my good Mr Inverary, do not let me for a moment divide your attention from the ladies; for, you know, of two evils you should always choose the least.”

“ Well, I’ll excuse you *this* time, Mr Inverary,” said Miss Hyndford, put a little into humour again by this timeous submission of the parties; “ for I see that you are not *just* the weak character that I supposed you. But I must back to Champ Fleury—Luckily I have no change to make.

“ Pray, offer me your arm when we go in to dinner, Mr Madrake,” she added in a whisper as she passed; “ I really cannot endure any attention from that man Inverary.”

CHAPTER XII.

“ One minute did he look, and then—
As though he felt some deadly pain,
From its sweet light, through heart and brain—
Shrunk back, and never look’d again.”

Loves of the Angels.

“ WELL, you were really good-natured, Mr Madrake, to do as I desired you,” commenced Miss Hyndford, the moment the dessert, by announcing the physical appetite to be nearly satisfied, gave signal for that loose, desultory, unmeaning sort of persiflage, invented for the purpose, we believe, of allowing opportunities for the better enactment of all those multitudinous “ nothings,” which at any other time would appear too gross for the understanding to digest or receive.

“ Good-natured, I presume, for neglecting both Lady Montgomery and Lady Juliana,” replied Madrake, less, however, by word than by look.

“ If I were not tired of a conversation kept up about eyes for the last twenty years, I should petition that those large ones of yours should be put out,” continued Miss Hyndford, who was at any time sufficiently clever to *take*. “ They exhibit—*permettez-moi*—too much.”

“ They discover by *reflexion*, I suppose, too much of that agreeable penchant which *somebody* entertains,” cried Madrake, still maintaining the high privilege of the gaze.

“ Sometimes people maintain a penchant for a cat, Mr Madrake. I believe I shall always remain Miss Hyndford.”

“ A most excellent resolution ! and not to be broken, I hope, for the sake of bringing trouble into any body’s family.”

“ Should *I* bring trouble into any person’s family, Mr Madrake ?”

“ Who does not ? And, assuredly, those

many and frequent condescensions, *not* in the way of Inverary"—

—"Condescensions, Mr Madrake! Pray what were they?" interrupted the lady in wrath.

"You want an instance:—Well, you could not drink wine with Mr Inverary, without thinking of my good health at the same time."

"These are civilities, Mr Madrake, which mean nothing—mere instances of condescension and good-breeding."

"And yet the lover will make them his only food!—will think upon them—dwell upon them—and will undertake that most unpleasant of all earthly perambulations, a long walk, that he may think upon them and dwell upon them again!"

"Is he very rich, and who are his connexions?" here inquired Miss Hyndford of herself; and she said gently, "Mr Madrake, I had no idea that you were a sentimentalist."

"No?"

"No;—nor that you possessed half so much feeling."

“ It is our way, my dear Miss Hyndford. We men display love, tenderness, feeling, for a while; and then our *inamoratas* take up the cudgels and admire *us*—and that for the rest of our lives. Who would not wish to marry, and bring trouble into his house?”

“ He is a strange man *that*,” again thought Miss Hyndford. “ Perhaps, in spite of all the settlements I could make, such a character might persuade me to settle in the desert wilds of North America; sail perhaps against the Algerines. I must disentangle myself, and get quit of the nondescript.—Mr Madrake,” she exclaimed, with a look of grand returning dignity, “ may I ask you to send me a few of those muscatels? I used to think them very nice.”

“ Pardon me, my dear Miss Hyndford, I keep them all, with Lady Montgomery’s permission, as a *bonne-bouche* for the least intelligent disciples of my Sunday-school. At *my* age, such occupations fall in the way of discipline; at *your* age, half the world must be enlightened.”

“ Mr Madrake !!!—Pray, Lady Juliana, give over talking to that unfaithful man, Mr Inverary, and listen to what is going on, will you ?”

Lady Juliana prepared herself to succumb to Miss Hyndford’s summons.

“ And so, Mr Madrake, you have set up in favour of Sunday-schools ? It seems, then, there is grace enough left for every one, at this rate.”

“ Only for you and I, Miss Hyndford. Lady Juliana does not teach Sunday-schools.”

“ Nor superintend them, Mr Madrake ?”

“ Nor superintend them. She leaves all such and similar employments, for the taming of devils who have been unable to succeed, or to make a noise, in any other way.”

Miss Hyndford was speechless ; and Lady Montgomery and Lady Juliana looked as if they wished to have the mystery unriddled.

“ I do not exaggerate. Charity evening ladies’ schools are seminaries of instruction for the old as well as the young ; for the teachers as well as for the taught.”

“ In a religious sense, certainly, Mr Madrake,” cried Miss Hyndford.

“ No; in mere matters of worldly conduct; for, as Madame Genlis has wisely said, ‘ A woman at a certain age must either be married, become a gamester, or turn devotee.’ The last is the least liked, but the vanity of presiding over the ignorant in the shape of a ladies’ school, gradually prepares them for the degradatory task. We very seldom see *men* enter into such associations; and we have only to retrace the former lives of the teachers themselves, to discover and detect the true motives of their very sublime and magnanimous intentions.”

“ And so the whole world are hypocrites, Mr Madrake?”

“ No; there are a sufficient number of the truly pious, as well as of the enthusiastically devout, without the assistance of that fashionable tribe, who sail in mid air between fashion and pride—the despair of getting established, and the desire of getting exalted; and who think they have eternally secured for themselves a saintship, by giving up evening parties for dining ones, a theatre and a ball for the more

evangelical dissipation of flying after preachers who only contradict each other; and in reading or writing tracts;—whose charity consists in separating themselves from the less distinguished members of their personal acquaintance; and whose benevolence is only to be heard of in printed subscription lists; whilst the *real* poor, and the unfortunate, are driven with scorn from their door, or dismissed with disdain from their presence.—Nobody *here*, I am persuaded, teaches a charity evening school; for if they did, I should have heard of it.—The Scripture, we know, hath affirmed, that *all* is vanity.”

“Juliana,” said her mother, looking her earnestly in the face; “Juliana, what is to become of you now? My dear Miss Hyndford, you appear heated—shall we leave?”

“The sooner the better, Lady Montgomery,” answered Miss Hyndford, attempting a giggle to conceal her resentment; “I shall look upon it as quite an escape. You see how much Lady Juliana appears frightened.”

“Stay, Lady Juliana!” said Madrake, in a

low emphatic whisper, as she prepared to follow her mother and Miss Hyndford.

Lady Juliana paused, while he held the half-opened leaf of the large door in his hand.

“ This secret, Lady Juliana, I did not discover—a true proof of your unobtrusive goodness, your genuine piety, and unaffected worth ! A proof how much you desire the happiness of mankind and their welfare, without any sinister reference to yourself.—Will you condescend to receive from one who *always* esteemed you, a little transient piece of advice ? ”

Lady Juliana, though in some confusion, bowed.

“ Continue, then, to do good for *its own sake*—at least, while you are yet young—and never afford to the malicious and the indifferent an opportunity for distrusting or suspecting your motives. To you,” he added in a still more impressive tone of voice, “ to whom I must always speak the truth, I will say, that every just mind must approve of a system of education, in which nothing is conferred but what is good,—nothing advanced but what is just ! ”

“ Had you any thing to do with the agricultural report for July for ——— shire, Mr Inverary ?” continued Madrake, seating himself opposite to that gentleman, and making a rumble amongst the adjoining wine-coolers, finger-cups, &c. &c.

“ Mr Inverary had not, but he was hand and glove with those who had ;” and Mr Inverary now entered, as Madrake had wished him to do, upon a dreary dissertation on the last mentioned prices of grain and other crops ; a definition of their qualities, &c. all ending at last in a long harangue about the corn laws.

Though a vigilant observer would *not* have discovered that Madrake was both wearied and disgusted with Mr Inverary’s weak and vacillating prosody, and his very imperfect comprehension of his subject, still he sat listening, and listening attentively. He saw that Mr Inverary’s great object, though he obviously mistook the means, was to win over or make up to all and sundries visitors at *Madame la Comtesse de Champ Fleury’s* ; and he also had a desire, on this occasion, to gain and to be gained. Mr

Inverary, however, paused before coming to any definite conclusion, from a fear lest he should deprive Miss Hyndford of the pleasure of rating him for his very early appearance. He rose from his chair, therefore, leaving Madrake once more to the comfort of his own inclinations.

The sun had just sunk beneath a gloomy mass of darkening clouds, leaving a still and melancholy light to supply the place of its former bright and dazzling beams, when Madrake seated himself in an open summer-house or temple, which commanded the chateau and part of the surrounding demesnes of Champ Fleury.

“ If, in childhood,” he thus soliloquized, “ we can seize with avidity upon the delights of pleasure and the gifts of wealth ; and, with a satisfied heart, feel the smile of heaven manifested in a religious veneration for the Author of all good ; how much, then, are they to be admired, who preserve in more matured life a mind yet undepraved and uncorrupted by experience ; in whose virtuous souls no tempestuous passion has been permitted to triumph ;

and in whom innocent and peaceful thoughts still flourish in their pristine strength ! This sweet retreat, imbosomed in all the dignity of beauty and tranquillity, contains yet *one* who is charmed with its beauties, who is susceptible of its benefits—a being, whose gentle bosom is not yet rankled with uneasy vanity, nor tortured with the ambition of rivalry and competition ; whose pure soul accords with the bright light of heaven, and whose angelic attributes are constantly employed in the kindest sympathies of domestic life ! Yes, Juliana, I have felt for thee, since the first moment that I beheld thee, a deep and inexpressible interest, which taught me to investigate and inspect thy simplest as well as thy most perfect qualities ; and I have found them all, and more than all, my hopes had wished ! Cherished, however, in so gentle a home, thy young steps guided by beings in whom fond affection was not more perceptible than the love of right, perhaps you have not surpassed the expectations that were formed of thy smiling infancy and early youth ! Perhaps, even then, there dwelt upon thy cheeks of loveliness, a ray of inspired good-

ness, which no after charm could supply, no after virtue paint ! Perhaps, favoured by Heaven, you were not even permitted to view the rocks on which the virtues of others have been wrecked—the fathomless depths into which thy own kindred have been betrayed !” * * * * *

Leaving Madrake, then, to the tipsy joys of his own unimagined imagination, we must now attend the Lady Montgomery and her friends in the small Venetian recess withdrawing-room of Champ Fleury.

“ What can have become of Mr Madrake, I wonder,” said Miss Hyndford, looking round her with a cold stare as the tamer shade of Mr Inverary now ventured to intrude itself. “ *Always* odd, I perceive ;” and she turned again to a pair of needle-dobbed hand-screens, with the snow-imitating beauties of which she had already played ‘ fast and loose.’

The arrow, however, for once did not hit. Miss Hyndford discovered, through the rents she had made in the needle-dobbed hand-screens, a more than ordinary degree of content in the visage of her friend and butt, Mr Inverary ; and

that he had also drunk to the bottom his cup of coffee, instead of allowing it to grow cold, as usual, out of deference to her random remarks.

“ Mr Inverary—that is to say, if you can forgive the rudeness of the favour I am going to ask—hem !”—and Miss Hyndford stopped.

Mr Inverary drew back the cup that was approaching, for the last time, to his lips.

“ *Well*, Miss Hyndford ?”

“ O, pray, get on with your coffee : I cannot think of disturbing you upon any account. I really didn’t exactly observe that you had been helped to that same ingredient.”

“ O, Ma’am, I should be very rude to think of such a thing”—in your presence, he would have said.

—“ Not at all *rude*, Mr Inverary ; it is *I* that must apologize ; unless, indeed, you will yet condescend to save me the misfortune of having interrupted you.”

Mr Inverary went on with his coffee : he saw there was some lurking tempest hid under the veil of so much extraordinary and uncalled-for humility. At last he gave away his cup, in

order to await, with recovered attention, her further pleasure.

Mr Inverary waited in vain. The lady perceived the noose into which she had entangled him, and there she politely determined to keep him fast. The accidental approach of Lady Juliana, however, obliged her to break the spell; and in a half-childish half-beseeching tone she ventured "to beg to be informed what he had done with Mr Madrake?"

"Mr Madrake," according to Mr Inverary's account, "had strolled after wine into the Park."

"Strolled into the Park! And pray, why did not you stroll after him?—Lady Juliana, what can that man mean by prowling so much about every habitation he comes to? I really think he ought to discipline with Lord Aloof. Don't you think so?"

But Lady Juliana's attention was already too much engaged to reply—though the subject interested her—to the remark. Lady Juliana saw, through a slit of one of the large venetian blinds, the figure of Madrake himself advance hastily across the whole extent of the lawn—avoid, with

the foreknowledge of long experience, the sheep-track that led to the swampy brake in front of the pavilion—and arrive there, by the circuitous route to which safety, in defect of knowledge, must have otherwise compelled him to adhere.

“ Had he and his companions time to reconnoitre this lion also ?” she communed with herself. “ And yet, what could be obtained from a situation, which was itself best to be enjoyed in perspective ? That melancholy air, too, and fervent clasping of the hands, what has it to do with an evening’s ramble in the vicinity of Champ Fleury ? He leans his head now upon one of the pillars of the summer-house, and seems like one lost in some deep and anxious recollection. I even thought I saw him start !”—and Lady Juliana seated herself, as if the scene which she had just witnessed had proved too much for her.

“ Juliana !” said her mother, who saw that something had occurred to disturb her ; and Lady Montgomery led her daughter away into the adjoining apartment.

“ Well, do you know, Mr Inverary,” said Miss Hyndford, “ I think Mr Madrake insane,

and that he has now gone off to destroy himself."

"Destroy himself, Miss Hyndford! with your permission, I believe he dines with me to-morrow."

"To-morrow, Mr Inverary! Why, that's the very day I leave. But, hush! here he is; for there is no such thing as calculation amongst the Flibertigibbets."

Madrake was very much heated, having probably walked fast; he was now, however, quite in the *qui vive* of mirth and revelry.

Miss Hyndford could not altogether bridle her inclination to talk, though aware, in doing so, of the supposed detraction to her dignity. "Pray, Mr Madrake, may I ask what has become of you?"

"I was lost in pensive thought," answered Madrake, fixing his eyes, however, upon the now returning figures of Lady Juliana and her mother; "and had already consigned my soul over to the sweet delusion of reverie and contemplation, when I bethought me of the letters you promised to be so busy with to-day; for

since I have lived at Champ Fleury, I have become, from sentiment, a disciple of Mrs Fife's. Pray, into what humour did you put your correspondents?"

"Really, Mr Madrake, I am ashamed to inform you, that I did not pen off one single line this whole morning. I had a letter, which, by some accident or other, had been separated from the rest, and the news it contained changed all my ideas—in fact, negatived them in every one important point."

"Most delightful ! pray, let us hear all about it."

"But it is in confidence ; and marked ' private,' both within and without."

"So *very recherché*?"

Miss Hyndford shook her head, in further token of the implied mystification.

"Then so much the better ; produce the document."

"Not *now*, surely, Mr Madrake. You forget that Mr Inverary has not yet bidden us good-night."

Mr Inverary, so dismissed, took leave.

“ Well, that letter, Mr Madrake ; must you hear it *all* ? ”

“ O, no, just a little ‘ here and there ; ’ a few particulars.”

“ Well, then, let me read.——

“ ‘ Colonel Brown’s marriage with Miss Methodical, is now no longer a matter of speculation ; the ceremony takes place next week. The lovely bride is still to wear those simple robes which have helped to render her so very—and so very successfully—interesting.’ Further particulars.—‘ All the reports that have been so industriously spread respecting Lady Lumberfield and her embarrassments,—for

“ Slander,
Strong and sound of feet,
Flies thro’ the world afflicting men,”—

have proved equally wicked and unfounded. That lady’s prudent management, on the contrary, has accumulated sums, of which the world has hitherto had no conception. She has just made over legacies to an immense amount in favour of Colonel Brown, Sir Henry and Lady

Maringle, Mrs Augustus Maringle ; besides presents of vast consequence to her heirs the Aloofs. She is much the worse, however, of having kept so much company lately at Lumberfield, and is said at last to be dying.' A few concluding passages.—' A Mr Dander or Gander, a very rich person, has lately purchased a considerable tract, and intends building with the Cullelo stone. He is lately married ; and though every body goes to see the man and his wife —(nobody owns this)—when they appear at church or market, they are universally shunned as a nuisance. They occupy ——— Lodge for the present, and will remain there till you travel this way to inspect them ;—every thing is left to your decision. In the mean time, they have been the means of detaining that ferret of a body, Mrs Fife, who has done nothing but investigate these Ganders or Danders ; and as Lord Fiddle-faddle is coming back again, our miseries are at the full. Ask Lady Montgomery, and all proper people, if they ever met the young person who is to be Duchess of B——— ; for somebody having found out the

other day, that a certain well known piece of rock, situate in the middle of the sea, belongs not only to his Grace of B——, but to the county of Fife,—we are all in arms to place them in the ranks of our *magnates*. In the mean time it is proper to inform you, that we are all verging towards pauperism; five of our Lairds have abdicated, two are fled, and ten are at the horn. The ——s sold a coach last week; and we ourselves have lived for the last year just on the one-half of our right honourable rents.’—— Scraps.—‘ We have not agreed upon the etymology of the word you mention; but Dr Doubtaboutall intends writing off to his correspondents to-night, and I mean to engage all my acquaintance in the argument to-morrow. The diphthong can never be applied to words of that signification, unless the Goths should have exchanged dictionaries with the Vandals. Charles will write a treatise upon the thing immediately, and you must give him a hint; for, should Lord Fiddle-faddle once get intelligence of the matter, I think the controversy would last out the century, young as it is.

—————*Recollect* I write this letter solely to remind you of your promise to Lady Lumberfield, of the last invented cure for the toothache. N. B. Dr Doubtaboutall says steam. In such matters I am an infidel. However, as the Chevalier de Bouffler says,—

Convertissez-moi je vous prie ;

Vous en avez tant pervertie.

The teething system can only be done in sets, and mine is a faithless one, chiefly owing, as I have just insinuated, to Dr D.'s gross mismanagement. By the bye, I had nearly forgot, but the General's dropsy is a confirmed one. It won't do to rally him *now*, should he insist on styling you another Malvina ; and you know him to be no Oscar. So good-night.' Crossings in red ink.—' Pray bring with you the mighty Monsieur Diabolique, and, as a temptation, say that I do not want him ; but, being forced into the thing, have suffered him the *invite*. But don't do with him as you did with the Persian Prince—shew him, or read him the letter ; for Monsieur is, by all accounts, too deep for the intrigues of anti-simplicity. He will see all, and judge the worst.

We must have him though, merely that we may look sulky upon our neighbours.

“ ‘ I mentioned, in the first part of my letter, that the *Ganders* were in those parts. Don’t be afraid of them; I have denied myself twice at home, and don’t think that they will come again: Monsieur Diabolique will force them off the field abroad. I believe I once told you the Crimpfits and I were cronies before I was married, and might have been so yet, if Lord and Lady Aloof had consented to return their call, or the W——s had not placed them beneath *us* in the second set.....Charles Suttie is here; he drinks whisky, and shoots with a safety gun: He plays the rustic, wears greasy fustian, and tears the old turkey carpet with his iron heeled clogs. And yet, would you believe it? we are forced to entreat him to stay with us; and sometimes bribe his men to be out of the way, merely to detain him a little longer in our suite. Charles always succeeds; and why? because he has made up his mind that he will not. The only weak point, however, is, that he of late begins to think that he can sing. Pray cultivate

your voice, and sing him dumb.—I have barely room left to bid you make sure of Diabolique. He and Charles, in Fife, will make the Pilgrims of the North turn back ; and the admirers of the Campagna, Terni, and Clitumnus, crawl to Crail, to behold the wonders of a much more astonishing sight ! ”

“ No wonder, Mr Madrake,” added Miss Hyndford, letting the letter, however, tumble to the ground, to be picked up again, perhaps, by the much wished-for Monsieur Diabolique ; “ no wonder than my ideas should have been changed. You see how much has been said in a part ! ”

“ Of a character, too,” replied Madrake, “ so very impressive. She is a wicked spirit, surely, that dictated such a performance. In fact, she is not honest.”

“ Then you were never so mistaken, Mr Madrake. My friend is esteemed the most amiable woman in Fife. Gives forty tons of coal, and ten pounds, to the poor every year in the world ; besides fifty suits of flannel, and something else.”

“ Good certainly will *sometimes* come out of evil.—You cannot for a moment assert, that your female virago has the least pretensions to charity of spirit ?”

“ According to the Duke de la Rochefoucault and others, nobody is exactly influenced by the mere *spirit* of charity, I should think, Mr Madrake.”

“ Charity, I take it, however, consists more in humility, meekness, kindness, than in spirit :—Spirit is rather too much of a factious denomination. But stay, Je tire vers ma fin,—and must confide my last breath, not to you, but to that more simple-looking goddess, Lady Juliana, on whom my eyes now repose for a last comfort. You know I depart to-morrow morning early, and dine with Mr Inverary on the road.”

“ And I follow,” added Miss Hyndford, “ to-morrow morning late; and pick up Monsieur Diabolique at Singleton, where, for a wonder, more than ten of us meet and dine.”

“ And so, as the darker shades of night succeed to the fairer ones of morning, your wicked shadows will tumble after me in spite.”

“ Let us have the honour of Lady Juliana’s in the mean time, Mr Madrake. I have got five new songs to try over to-night yet ; and I see not why your Muse should set itself in opposition to my music.”

“ *Your* music ! as King William said of General Hamilton’s honour.”

“ Well, then, to the Muse. We must think much of you, and of every thing you say, now that we are about to lose you at any rate.”

“ My Muse, sprightly, comic, and convivial,” gaily replied Madrake, now turning with an impassioned air to the Lady Juliana, “ has her sisters all in *thee* ; while Miss Hyndford, and Lady Montgomery there, like another Hemus and Rhodope, I condemn, not to petrefaction for arrogating to themselves honours of which they were unworthy, but to listen to the praises of another. Of Thalia, gay and delightful. Of Euterpe, of various harmonic powers. Of Terpsichore, who loves dance as well as song. Of Erato, the ennobler of love. Of Melpomene, the mistress of the mournful. Of Clio, the guardian of glory. Of Calliope, of heroic song.

Of Polyhymnia and Urania, more various, but always elevating inspirers. Of Thalia, the daughter of Mnemosyne, or memory, fertile in recollected wisdom and intelligence; and to whom Ocypete, Aello, and Celeno, as well as the other more inferior daughters of the sea and land, must for ever bow—obedient and submissive.”

In concluding these last words, Madrake, as if taking advantage of the darkness of the now deepening twilight, knelt for a moment before Lady Juliana’s chair; then, pressing her hand slightly and respectfully to his lips, quitted the apartment without any of the other ladies having noticed, or having been able to notice, the transaction.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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